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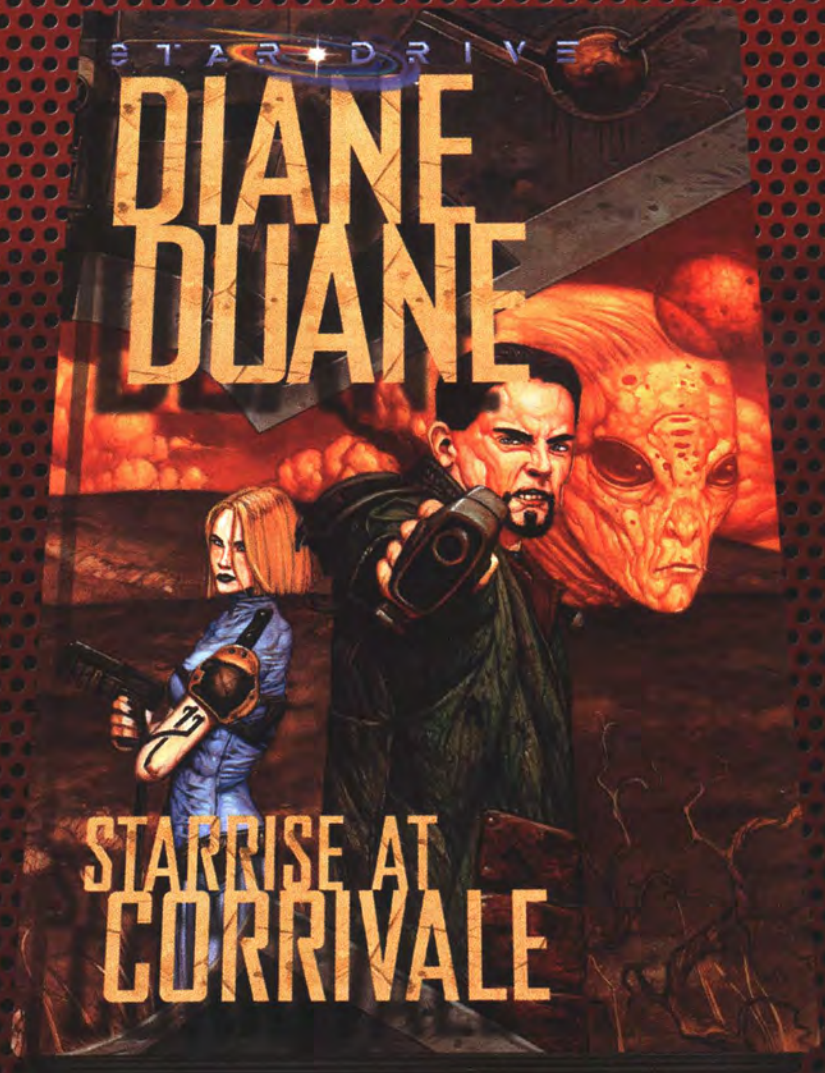

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DRAGON®

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ON THE COVER

Robh Ruppel summons the undead for this spooky Halloween issue.

The Wyrm's Turn™

Return to Castle Ravenloft

The original *I6 Ravenloft* adventure by Tracy and Laura Hickman (later revised by Bruce Nesmith as *House of Strahd*) consistently appears on best-module lists, including my own. It's the only one I've ever run more than twice, and it's the only one I'd gladly let the same player experience twice. Somehow it manages to be just as frightening on a return visit.

Those of you who've read the module know why. At the beginning, the DM shuffles a deck of cards and lays them out in a "fortune telling." The resulting pattern determines both the plot and the location of key characters and objects. Thus, even if you've played the adventure before, you might be surprised that "the devil Strahd" wants something entirely different this time, and the items that helped you survive last time aren't where you expected them to be.

If that's all there were to *Ravenloft*, it wouldn't have much more replay value than a computer game that places treasure randomly. There's something about the place that makes you *want* to return.

Some might point to the villain, Strahd Von Zarovich. On the surface, he's not far removed from that most famous of vampires, yet not knowing exactly what he wants each time you dare intrude on his domain makes him genuinely mysterious.

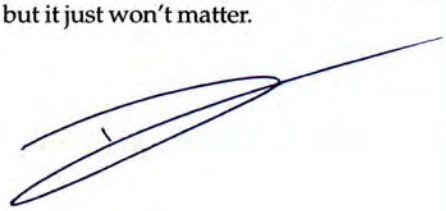
It's even better if the DM takes a few liberties with the random encounter charts. Instead of having Strahd kill a PC, sometimes it's better to remind them how easily he *could*. Last time we played *Ravenloft*, Strahd discovered an unconscious paladin left briefly alone. His companions returned to find their friend's hands folded over his chest, as in the final repose, but he was otherwise unharmed. *That* sent them running.

Even more than its fiendish master, Castle Ravenloft itself is the key to the adventure. What a great map! Still, if you break it down, the bulk of the adventure is really just a huge—if excellent—dungeon crawl. This has been my argument lately: The horror of Ravenloft doesn't come from the basic adventure design. You can experience real horror in a location-based adventure as much as in an event-driven scenario.

When you look at its individual parts, the adventure shouldn't work at all. It's crammed with horror clichés: a driverless black carriage, a sinister butler, a pipe organ, a ruined chapel, catacombs, tombs, coffins, bats, zombies—you name it. It *shouldn't* work, but it does, and somehow those clichés are more powerful *because* you've seen them before.

Ultimately, while I'm full of opinions, I don't really know what makes *Ravenloft* such a great module. I know only that I keep going back to it. If you've run *Ravenloft* (or *House of Strahd*), tell me your theories. What moment scared your players the most? Did they defeat Strahd or merely escape him? Have you used anything from *Ravenloft* in your other horror adventures?

This Halloween, I'm running *Ravenloft* for the periodicals crew and a few survivors of the Door Committee. All of them will have read these words by then, but it just won't matter.



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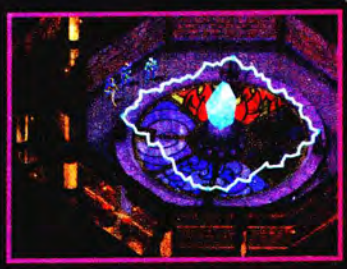

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Dragons, Not Starships

Eighteen years ago, I first looked at my older brother's copy of *Dragon® Magazine*. I was almost eight years old, and I don't recall which issue it was; all I remember was a cover with a small dragon in a mushroom and flower patch.

As I looked through the pages and read the articles, my imagination sprang to life with elves, dwarves, and dragons. I quickly found other issues and read like mad. When I turned eight, my brother bought me the basic D&D® boxed set. With my own dice, I set out on adventures with my friends. I can still remember where I was when I ran my first character. Also, I remember where I was two years later when I ran my first game session as the Dungeon Master. I have been DMing ever since.

Through these years, I've been an avid reader of this magazine. Though I never bought a subscription, I buy an issue whenever I see a new one. Why do you think this is? It's because I play a *fantasy* roleplaying game. I have played many genres of roleplaying games, including sci-fi, horror, and others. However, I always return to the AD&D® game. I have made many friends due to how easy it is to teach new players the rules.

Fantasy is something to which everyone can relate. We were taught fairy tales, stories of knights in armor and of maidens in distress from menacing dragons.

I buy *Dragon Magazine* for the articles, the artwork, the humor, and the sharing of fantasy from gamers to gamers. But lately I see fantasy getting mixed up with sci-fi. Alternity® game articles in a magazine about the AD&D game? In Issue #237, Pierce Watters writes: "*Dragon Magazine* is the periodical of AD&D game material for roleplaying gamers, and we will continue to give you the best articles about roleplaying that we possibly can."

I looked at the Alternity game, even talked to some people in a game shop who were playing it. Looks like it might be a cool game. But that's beside the point. I can always find an idea for an adventure by thumbing through a *Dragon Magazine*. It actually causes a minor irritation when I bump into an article that has no bearing on what I'm looking for in *Dragon Magazine*.

How about a separate Alternity magazine; maybe call it "Alternate Views"? But please, on a serious note, remember those of us who read *Dragon Magazine* to see dragons, not starships.

Dewain Higbee
Anchorage, AK

I have subscribed for over 10 years, and one of the things that has kept me subscribing year after year is that *Dragon Magazine* covers *all* of TSR's games, not just the AD&D game.

The Return of Ares?

I am writing in response to the "Fantasy Only!" letter by Michael Seymour in issue #249 of *Dragon Magazine*. In his letter, Michael claims that *Dragon Magazine* should contain no articles for the Alternity game. I strongly disagree with this point of view.

I have subscribed for over 10 years, and one of the things that has kept me subscribing year after year is that *Dragon Magazine* covers *all* of TSR's products, not just the AD&D game. I realize that the majority of the coverage will be for AD&D, and that's fine. It is, after all, TSR's most popular game. However, it is not the only TSR game I own, play, and enjoy. I also have the Alternity®, Boot Hill®, Star Frontiers®, Spellfire®, and Blood Wars® games. Where else will these games (as well as the Dragon Dice™ and Marvel Super Heroes™ games) get coverage, if not in *Dragon Magazine*?

One of these days, the Alternity game will gain enough popularity and momentum to justify a magazine of its own. Until that time, Alternity garticles should be a part of *Dragon Magazine*, just as the *Ares* section (containing SF and super hero articles) was a part of *Dragon Magazine* years ago.

Please don't restrict your coverage of any TSR games in *Dragon Magazine*. I think you will lose more people by restricting your coverage than you will lose if you continue to cover TSR's other games.

Greg Foster
Columbus, OH

As frequent readers have seen, the debate over whether to include non-AD&D articles

in DRAGON Magazine has drawn plenty of letters from both sides of the issue. Some want nothing but AD&D articles, while others want plenty of ALTERNITY articles. A surprisingly large number of readers have suggested the middle ground: that we include some ALTERNITY material until the game has been around long enough to support its own magazine.

In the interest of pleasing most of the people most of the time, it's that middle ground that we'll take. Soon you'll see Ares revived as a department, appearing as often as we have great material to print, eventually monthly.

Likewise, we'll support all TSR games in proportion to their popularity and the arrival of quality articles. That means the AD&D game remains our primary focus, and the vast *majority of the magazine will remain dedicated to the most popular roleplaying game.*

Keep an eye on the magazine over the next few months to see exactly how we're responding to your letters. We think you'll like what you see.

We know *you'll tell us if we're wrong, but tell us what you like, too. Whatever you do, keep the letters coming!*

Where Have All the Monsters Gone?

I have recently become a subscriber to *DRAGON Magazine*, and I really enjoy reading it cover to cover. My friends and I started playing D&D around 1976. I was rather young then, and my interest in the game eventually faded.

Now I am 30, and in the past year another group of friends and I have started playing again. I have found a new enjoyment in playing the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. It's amazing to me the number of books I have missed during my absence. I find it disappointing that many are out of print.

From recent issues, I really enjoy reading the "Wyrms of the North" articles. Another article that I especially enjoyed in issue #248 was "The Missing Dragons," by Richard Lloyd. I like all the monsters that make up the AD&D world, but my first love are the dragons.

I was recently looking through a friend's D&D Immortal Rules boxed set. Inside, the DM's Guide made reference to Dragon Rulers: Pearl the Moondragon, Opal the Sundragon, Diamond the Stardragon, and The Great Dragon. The book says that the descriptions can be found in the D&D Master boxed set. Since this set is unavailable, I was hoping that you might have access to it and could print this information in a future issue. Also, I found reference to an astral dragon from the DRAGONLANCE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® tome and an adamantite dragon from Outer Planes MC. Both books are out of print.

As you can see, my interest is great, and the information is hard to find. After reading that there was a possible third edition rules in the works, I must say that the first thing that should be done is to make available any lost information, especially all missing creatures, from the now out-of-print D&D literature.

I'm not saying that TSR should reprint out-of-print material, but they could offer it in a new compilation or format so that those currently entering the AD&D game have access to it. I don't know how many other players would agree, but a request for input from your readers on this idea might be a good idea.

Mark Papina
1033 Wiget Lane
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

At first we were wary of updating a classic article from these pages, knowing that we have quite a few long-time readers who probably still have a copy of the issue with the original "Missing Dragons" article. Fortunately, the response to Rich's article has been great, and we'll be glad to do similar articles now and then—assuming someone proposes them.

Demons and Devils and Fiends (Oh, My!)

I have been an avid reader of *DRAGON Magazine* since issue #48, and I must say that I'm getting used to the new layout and format of the magazine.

I especially enjoyed the article containing statistics for the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and FORGOTTEN REALMS® comic books (in issues #246 and #247). I'd like to request an article on the characters from the fantastic DOUBLE DIAMOND TRIANGLE™ Saga books. I have just finished Part 8, *Easy Betrayals*, and I can hardly wait to see how the story ends. I would love to see the stats for the Paladins (Miltiades, Jacob, etc.) and the Mercenaries (Sharessa and company), as well as the other characters in the story. I can't imagine what the Bloodforge would look like!

I see TSR is reviving the GREYHAWK® setting, and the advertisements evoke

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nostalgic memories of the original AD&D adventures and rules. Will demons and devils be named such? And will the names baatezu and tanar'ri be dropped from the game lingo? Also, will assassins return to the game as they appeared in the original *Player's Handbook*?

It's a real nuisance to drag out my old *Monster Manual* for stats on demons and devils since the new rules renamed them and dumped them into the PLANESCAPE setting.

A final request, since you are pushing ALTERNITY at the moment. Could you likewise run articles on the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game when it's released? Fair is fair, after all.

Frank Troise
Staten Island, NY

Michele Carter, PLANESCAPE® line editor, assures us that baatezu and tanar'ri remain the names of those most notorious of fiends. That doesn't mean, however, that the average character from the GREYHAWK setting knows their proper names. To him, they're still devils and demons.

As for assassins, we can't tell you anything officially yet, but keep an eye on upcoming GREYHAWK products for some wonderful surprises for both newcomers and old fogies alike.

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES article? Sure thing! Just check out "Home, Sweet Headquarters" later in this issue. We have a few more MARVEL SUPER HEROES articles coming up in the next few months.

The Canon on Cannons

I have enjoyed your magazine for years, and I had been looking forward to the articles on ship warfare and cannons in your most recent issue with great expectations. Imagine my disappointment when I find that the article is full of errors that could easily have been avoided, thereby avoiding DM headaches from that category of player who challenges historical (and real-world physical) inaccuracies.

First, none of the drafts given for the classes of ships come close to the real value; only rowboats and small power boats have drafts of 6 feet or less. More typical values for the classes would be 12–15' for a brigantine, 14–16' for a carrack, 6–12' for a cutter, 14–18' for a fluyt,

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Cannon Statistics

Gun Size	Bore Dia	Gun Weight	Gun Length	Projectile type	Projectile Wt.	Powder
1 pdr.	2"	220 lb.	36–48"	B, Bu	1 lb.	.25 lb.
2 pdr.	2.75"	350–700 lb.	48–72"	B, Bu, G	2.25 lb.	.5 lb.
3 pdr.	3"	700 lb.	72"	B, Bu, G	3 lb.	2.5 lb.
4 pdr.	3.35"	1,500 lb.	96"	B, Bu, G, C	4 lb.	3 lb.
6 pdr.	3.67"	2,500 lb	120"	B, C, G, Ch	6.1 lb.	4.25 lb
8 pdr.	4.2"	3,000 lb.	720"	B, C, G, Ch	8 lb.	5 lb.
12 pdr.	4.62"	4,800 lb.	144"	B, C, G, Ch, S	12.3 lb.	8 lb.
16 pdr.	5.08"	4,800 lb.	120"	B, C, G, Ch, S	16 lb.	10 lb
18 pdr.	5.3"	5,790 lb.	124"	B, C, G, Ch, S	18.5 lb.	8–10 lb
24 pdr.	5.82"	5,800 lb.	124"	B, C, G, Ch, S	24.4 lb.	8–24 lb.
32 pdr.	6.4"	6,384 lb.	125"	B, C, G, Ch, S	32.6 lb.	10–22 lb.
42 pdr.	7"	8,400 lb.	124"	B, C, G, Ch, S	40.7 lb.	14–24 lb.
8" (64 pdr.)	8"	9,240 lb.	124"	B, C, G, S	65 lb.	7–15 lb.
9" (96 pdr.)	9"	9,600 lb.	131"	B, C, G, S	96 lb.	13–25 lb.
10" (130 pdr.)	10"	16,500 lb.	146"	B, C, G, S	130 lb.	20–40 lb.
11" (168 pdr.)	11"	15,700 lb.	161"	B, C, G, S	168 lb.	15–35 lb.

Gun Weight for the cast iron barrel only. Carriages are extra weight. Bronze guns weigh about 15% more.
Projectile types are: Ball (B), Buck (Bu), Grape (G), Cannister (C), Chain (Ch),and Shot (S).

16–26' for a frigate, 12–16' for a galleass, 22–30' for galleons and man-o-wars, 6–10' for pinnaces, and 15–18' for sloops.

Second, the frigate was an important class of warship primarily because, being lighter in tonnage for a similar length compared to a man-o-war, it was noticeably faster and more maneuverable. Its armament was also of such a weight that should two or three frigates encounter a man-o-war they could often take the larger ship down with minimal casualties on their side. So important was this class that, toward the end of the 18th century and into the early 19th century, the class was made larger, with the U.S.S. *Brandywine* being a good example. Once steam power came on the scene, the classes were suddenly lengthened 70' to 100' to hold the machinery needed to propel the ships and to store the 100 to 300 tons of coal that went in to the various classes.

The final disappointment was the cannons and their munitions. Cannons by their very nature are great consumers of gunpowder, and they can also strike targets at point blank range. Hitting a man-sized target with anything bigger than a 2 pounder is nearly impossible (due to the inability to adjust the aim points rapidly), but direct hits were not the primary source of casualties from cannon fire: Splinters were. A solid shot passing through 18–36" of oak that made up the sides of wooden warships would spray any one to either side with lethal splinters of wood. These splinters were what maimed or killed 80% or more of the casualties in ship to ship battles. Being struck by a cannon ball, as Admiral Lord Nelson was, was an exceedingly rare event. Here is a table listing some 17th through early 19th century cannon used aboard ship.

S. Hopkins
Airway Heights, WA

We showed Keith "Powdermonkey" Strohm this letter and the accompanying table. After the screaming and crying and cursing, he replied:

"I applaud this attention to detail and agree that such dedication to historical fact increases the enjoyment of historical-minded players, but the AD&D system is a fantasy roleplaying game, not a wargame. My main goal for the 'War Ships of the Sea' article was to create an exciting system of AD&D naval combat based upon real-world information but not slavishly devoted to historical accuracy. A painstaking historical study of naval ships and their translation into AD&D rules was beyond the scope of the article and the original accessory.

"The table from S. Hopkins is sure to please those who want more historical accuracy when using the ship-to-ship combat rules in Of Ships and the Sea *and 'Warships of the Sea.'"*

Well, that's close *to what he replied. This is a family magazine, after all.*

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Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. You must include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed (we won't print a letter sent anonymously), but we'll withhold your name or print your full address if you so request.

Does your game group use nonstandard player character races? If so, what are those races?

Classy Classic Class System

All this recent talk concerning the advent of a 3rd Edition AD&D® game brings back memories of the unveiling of the 2nd Edition game ten years ago. Frankly, I've considered that original 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* to be the best product produced by TSR in the last ten years. Though I'm no stranger to complicated skill-based and dice-intensive roleplaying systems, the simplicity and elegance of the rules presented within the *PHB* held a magical allure that subsequent products could not quite match.

During the course of the last decade, however, the interest of the general roleplaying public seems to have shifted to skill-based systems like those of the White Wolf games, and AD&D has attempted to follow suit, with such products as *Skills & Powers*. This is a grave mistake, I believe, for the strength of AD&D has always been its class-level system. In truth, the high fantasy style of play that it advocates is ill-suited to the realism and nit-picking that skill-based systems inevitably produce.

Granted, the classes seem limiting, and conflicts between skills and proficiencies, magic systems, classes and kits, and a whole plethora of other difficulties result from trying to balance the attractive simplicity of classes with the often necessary specificity of individual skills. However, I believe that the differences may be worked out within the framework of a class-level system. Permit a greater degree of flexibility in choosing and changing classes, eliminate the overabundance of numbers resulting from too many experience point tables and redundant, unnecessary ability scores (Do we really need such a large range as 3–18? Or 5–20 in the DARK SUN® campaign?), and streamline the magic system.

While this is a rather tall order (er, request?), what better time to tackle such a task than in designing a new edition? The 1st-Edition game revealed the limits of an overbranched family tree of classes. The 2nd Edition started off by pruning those irritating branches but soon sank into the quagmire of excessive, unbalanced kits, optional rules, and an unwieldy conversion to a skill-based system. The third time is the charm, or so we hope. Without delving into new realms of possibilities, the 3rd Edition may well be the death knell of the much-beloved class-level system. This is the chance to move the class system into new territory, operating from the secure home that 1st and 2nd Edition have built.

The class-level system is what has made AD&D a classic.

Here are some examples of the ideas that I have incorporated into the 2nd Edition game to eliminate inconsistencies without compromising the flavor of the game. They are suitable suggestions for the 3rd Edition:

1. Change all skills to proficiencies. This was explored to a lesser degree in the *Masque of the Red Death* and *Requiem* expansions for the RAVENLOFT® setting. Classes instead delineate proficiency groups from which the characters may choose their abilities. A standard progression chart for each class conforming to the 2nd Edition classes can offer suggestions.

2. Allow easier class changing (dual-class) while increasing the specificity of class abilities. In other words, make the classes more specific by eliminating "hybrid" abilities like the bard's ability to cast wizard spells, but allow characters to change classes with fewer restrictions and regulations.

3a. Expand the scope of experience levels. Experience points reflect the learning that a character undergoes over the course of adventuring, research, training, etc. Not only does a character increase his skill in performing tasks with which he is familiar but also he can learn new skills. Allow, then, a character to increase his level in his current class or to switch to a new one upon gaining an experience level.

3b. Use a single experience table for each race. This reverts back, somewhat, to the D&D® system. But consider the benefits: it forces each class to be equal at each level of experience, doing away with conflicts between nifty rangers and paladins and lowly fighters. Everyone is equal. Additionally, this further reflects the fact that longer-lived demihumans learn more slowly than do humans. After all, imposing a level limit simply implies that the magical elves have less wizardly potential (level limit 15) than mundane humans (unlimited in that

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9 AM EDT, May 21, 1998

Last Unicorn Games announces new STAR TREK® roleplaying games, miniatures and live action games.

Los Angeles, CA - Last Unicorn Games has signed a multi-year license agreement with Viacom Consumer Products, the licensing division of Paramount Pictures, for the production of roleplaying games, supplements and accessories based on STAR TREK®: THE ORIGINAL SERIES™, STAR TREK®: THE NEXT GENERATION™, STAR TREK®: DEEP SPACE NINE™ AND STAR TREK®: VOYAGER™. This license will also allow Last Unicorn Games to produce miniature figure playing pieces and live action gaming material based on each of the properties, it was announced today by Bernard Cahill, business affairs and licensing, Last Unicorn Games.

We are expanding our presence in the mass market through our new distribution arrangement with Simon and Schuster and are very excited about the opportunity to bring STAR TREK® to game fans everywhere," said Christian Moore, creative director, Last Unicorn Games. "The richness and detail of the STAR TREK® universe truly places it in a class by itself. Its worlds, characters and stories are classics, and its tremendous fan appeal remains unequaled. It is our job to continue this great tradition, and our design team's initial development work is pushing the envelope for game play and graphic presentation. These games are gonna rock!

STAR TREK®, the greatest science fiction franchise of all time, has at long last returned to adventure gaming. Last Unicorn Games will release core game lines based on each of the four shows, with supplements and additional books building each line. The first release, a roleplaying game based on STAR TREK®: THE NEXT GENERATION™, will ship in the summer of 1998. Major releases for the other shows will follow at approximately six-month intervals.

In addition, Last Unicorn will be producing miniatures lines for each property, as well as rules for tabletop miniatures battles set in the Star Trek universe. Finally, a series of Live Action roleplaying books will allow fans to act out their character's adventures in sanctioned live action games and events throughout the world.

Last Unicorn Games, a Pennsylvania corporation with offices in Los Angeles, California, publishes the award winning roleplaying series - ARIA: Canticle of the Monomyth™ and collectible card games such as the critically acclaimed HERESY: KINGDOM COME™ and the best-selling DUNE™: EYE of the STORM™. Aria: Canticle of the Monomyth™ and Heresy: Kingdom Come™ are trademarks of Last Unicorn Games, Inc. DUNE™ is a trademark of the Herbert Limited Partnership. Last Unicorn Games and Last Unicorn Publishing are subsidiaries of Last Unicorn Games Inc.

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and every class). In this fashion, level limits can be made purely a function of ability scores while level advancement becomes a function of race, as they should be.

The class-level system is what has made AD&D a classic. One does not tamper with a winning formula, but one can certainly expand its applications.

Leon Chang
via email

Sprechen zie Dwarven?

In issue #249, the question of the month was "What optional rules from the AD&D game *PHB* and *DMG* do you never use? Why?"

In response to this, I would like to say that I enjoy the game, but the optional rule for "languages" is unnecessary. I never use it. Instead, I prefer the proficiency rules and take the slots for "languages" in the Intelligence chart (*PHB*) and change that to "extra proficiency slots"

The reason for this is that it adds realism to roleplaying. (Not every genius character knows twelve or thirteen languages fluently!)

For example, one of my players wants to play a mage and comes up with a history that makes him a hermit in the middle of a desert. He rolls for Intelligence and scores an 18. The table indicates that he has six languages that he is allowed from his race (half elf,) but the character hasn't been in contact with any other race, culture, or language. So where does he get those extra languages? Why not let him use those slots to buy a proficiency like, say, survival—desert or weather lore or direction sense. All of those could come in handy and make sense with his background.

Meanwhile, another player wants to be a merchant/conman (one of our house rule kits for thieves) who has a history of living in the city all of his life. Now, this city is of mixed cultures and is a trading center for most of the known world. Obviously he needs a lot of languages to get by. He rolls a 3, which gives him one additional language. It's hard to live in a trading center as a merchant when you can't even communicate with anyone around you!

To some, the language rule might work—if the character's background suits his ability scores. The languages normally work for "average" characters with Intelligence scores of approximately 8–12. However, my players want a variety. If I may quote them, "Being average is boring. It's better to have a character with something that makes him different from everybody else around him."

Greg Whyte
via email

Don't Mess With Success

Congratulations on such a wonderful and enjoyable magazine. I can't wait to get my grubby little fists on the new issue of *DRAGON Magazine*. I find I get a little crabby if someone disturbs me when I take that first perusal through the magazine. Anyway, enough about me ...

It is not without a little foreboding that I noticed the Question of the Month in the forum section. "Should there be a 3rd edition?" Innocent. Simple yet complex. "Should I drop this bomb? Should there be rain for forty days and forty nights?" The twitching has finally stopped, and I am back on solid foods again. In answer to the question, I don't believe there is any need for a third edition of the AD&D game.

I have played many other systems available and have been impressed, but I always found my way back to the AD&D game. I think the main reason that it is so popular—and why I have always stuck with it—is the versatility. The whole game is set up for the DM and the players to pick and choose the things to include, to make the game more enjoyable, be it oodles of magical items or even some of the rules. With the inclusion of all the optional rule books, the kits, the new magic systems from *Spells & Magic* (which I love, by the way), there are so many choices that it can be almost overwhelming. Throughout the game the emphasis has been on having fun, and the versatility of the game allows everyone to use what they like without affecting game play.

I seem to bring a lot of new people to the game, and another one of the things I love about AD&D is that it is easy to teach. One does not need a clear understanding of every rule to begin play and have some fun. The mechanics of the game are reasonable and easy to get the hang of, as are the characters, classes, and races. The magic system is one of the best and is easily tailored to suit personal tastes.

What I am trying to say is that I do not think there is any legitimate reason for a 3rd Edition of the AD&D game. I don't want the books I purchased to be obsolete unless there is some important reason for the change. If a 3rd Edition is really under consideration, please print some of the changes you're considering so we can respond to them.

All of that said and done, I do have one point. I have long thought it would be nice to see some sort of system to reflect fighters' prowess, as they rise in level, reflected in improved armor class. A naked 10th-level warrior with no Dexterity bonus would be easier to hit than almost any wizard with some sort of protection spell or minor magic item. I would like to see some suggestions on this, but I don't think it warrants a 3rd Edition.

Trevor V. Swanson
Phoenix, AZ

A Few Good Points

Having seen the weapon-superiority debate stretch on in the "Forum" for several issues, I thought I'd hurl myself into the fray. First, a correction for the letter from issue #250: the Dacian falx was not a polearm, but a scythe-bladed two-handed sword. I ought to know, because I researched the thing in the course of preparing my article "A Flurry of Swords" back in *DRAGON Magazine* #232. My main source was the Osprey "Men-at-Arms" book *Rome's Enemies 1: Germanics and Dacians.*

Now for this business of chopping the heads off of pikes with halberds and great swords: During the Renaissance, before they switched over to being pikemen themselves, the German mercenary Landsknects ("servants of the earth," since many were displaced farmers) armed themselves with two-handed swords for the specific purpose of hacking the heads off pikes, as well as short swords for use afterward, when rushing into a broken phalanx of pikemen. It must have worked, for the Landsknects were created specifically as a counter to the famed Swiss mercenary pikemen,

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and the Swiss pikeshaft was sheathed in iron for a full yard beneath the spearhead specifically so that a sword blow would not sever it. Apparently the Swiss never heard of those tests on wooden shafts, being forced to rely entirely on extensive battle experience. Certainly a group of relatively poor mountaineers, as they were in the beginning, would have been unlikely to make such an expensive modification to their pikes if it were not absolutely necessary. I suppose it comes down to the quality of the steel used in making those two-handed swords; I'd never heard of anyone trying to use the axe blades of halberds for this purpose.

The choice of weapon with which to arm one's troops depends as much or more on sordid economics as on effectiveness in battle. For instance, the crossbow did have greater armor-piercing ability than the longbow. However, crossbowmen and archers in medieval times were generally given the same amount of armor protection given to archers, slingers, and javelin throwers in antiquity: none or almost none. In a pitched battle in the open, the crossbow's slow rate of fire was a lethal handicap against the longbow, whose lesser ability to pierce armor meant little in an archer vs. crossbowman contest. (If the crossbowmen were on castle battlements or some other fortified position, the odds were more even.) It would have been a different story if the crossbowmen wore heavy armor, but what medieval commander in his right mind would waste expensive armor on base peasants and mercenary riff-raff? Similarly, if you use your archers mainly to keep the other side's archers off of your knights, then a weapon with good armor-piercing ability would seem too expensive to be worthwhile. To say nothing of the fact that most knights were leery of letting their own base peasants get their hands on weapons that were good at penetrating armor. Shoot down a few knights, even enemy knights, and they might get some dangerous ideas. The composite bows used by the Mongols and their kin were far more dangerous weapons. Not only were they more powerful than the longbow, but their arrowheads were tempered in brine for better armor-penetrating ability.

Finally, every type of weapon has its nemesis. Axes, maces, and pure slashing swords are best at one-on-one combat, being useful on the battlefield only when one disorganized mob fights another, or when other weapons have already been used to break up the enemy's formation. Short and two-handed swords have their uses against spearmen and pikemen, but any type of sword (or axe or mace) requires relatively open formations to be used effectively, and this looseness of formation can be exploited by shock cavalry armed with melee weapons. Even the tighter formations of Romans with their shortswords fell victim to cavalry at places like Carrhae and Adrianoploe, though at Carrhae they'd undergone an archery barrage as well. The tight formations of spearmen and pikemen are ideal for standing off shock cavalry, but they are more vulnerable to missile fire of any sort (as were the tight Roman formations at Carrhae), and their weapons were too unwieldy to be used effectively against swordsmen. Finally troops armed with missile weapons were usually all but helpless if enemy melee specialists closed to hand-to-hand range; the Assyrian armored archers with spearman support were virtually the only exception to this rule. As is the case today, the combined–arms army was the way to go if you wanted consistent success on the battlefield, with enough different types of weapons in your army to handle any possible contingency.

Given the length of this debate so far, I am under no illusions that my contribution will be the last word.

Given the length of this debate thus far, I am under no illusions that my contribution will be the last word. However, I hope it gives everyone something to think about before writing in, at least encouraging them to do some research first to make sure they get their facts straight.

Gregory W. Detwiler
Williamsburg, PA

$.02 on 3rd Edition

First off, I would like to add my two cents on the possible third edition. Then I will end this letter with one of my house rules that might be of interest to your readers as a point of discussion.

Of the few letters printed in the last two issues of *DRAGON Magazine* (#246 & #247), I have to agree with Cameron McKee (#246). I'll give my views on the topics in the order that Cameron did.

Ability Scores: The only comment on the topic is that, if anything is done to the ability scores, it would have to be on exceptional Strength. I, like Cameron, think it should be abolished. There is no need for it in the game. If you do decide to abolish it, leave the bonuses as they are in the player's guide; just delete the bonuses for scores 18/01–18/00 from the Strength charts. It would show a fairly realistic comparison between a (puny) human and a giant.

Races: I agree totally on restricting the player character races in the player's guide, with the exception of the following races: half-orcs (a must!) and the drow. They should be included in the player's guide under the elf subspecies category.

Before I get to my house rule, I would like to address the Question of the Month in issue #246. I think that not only would it be more practical to combine both manuals but it would also be more economical for the players, the DMs, and TSR. Since most AD&D players usually own both books anyway, why not combine them?

Now to the house rule I mentioned earlier. It concerns ability score generation. The method I use increases the chances for a heroic (but not overly powerful) character. Instead of having to flub a roll (or more) to get a decent score, just reroll both 1s and 2s and keep any result of a 3 or higher. This way you have at least an average score, since PCs should be somewhat better than Joe or Jane farmer if they are to survive their adventures and win gold and glory for them-

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selves. When using this method, your scores should average about 10–15 unless you are really lucky; my scores tend to hover around 14 with the occasional 16, 17, or even 18.

Matthew Seibel
9820 SW Frewing Street #28
Tigard, OR 97223

Against a 3rd Edition

All the conjecture in the past couple of issues regarding the possibility and desired structure of a 3rd Edition has inspired me to contribute my own thoughts. At first, the premise of a revision is exciting, something to refresh and renew interest in this fantastic hobby of ours. After careful consideration, however, I think there are several major arguments against the new edition that take precedence over expansion of the game in this direction.

Financial Aspects: I seem to recall reading somewhere recently that the average age of a roleplayer was 25. Correct me if I'm wrong, but this, to me, implies that the average gamer is experienced, having most if not all of the core books and perhaps a smattering of the optional expansion material. The 2nd Edition of AD&D game is vast. Many enthusiasts, including myself, have spent gross amounts of money and time accumulating a mere fraction of the existing material.

I have collected and enjoyed TSR products for 14 years and would not be interested in picking up a new edition of the game unless it was an incredible improvement over the former. If the changes were smart and significant, then it stands to reason that much of the optional material written relative to the second edition becomes obsolete. Is TSR going to create an updated volume of each book in the *Complete Handbook* series? Or compile the optional (but commonly used) material into one or two books so large that you would need a voadkyn to carry them for you? Either option is absurd.

Tokenism: There is no real need to overhaul the system just to oil a few squeaky doorknobs. Over the past years, TSR has worked to improve what is substandard and make up for what's lacking with the publishing of optional material. To somehow improve on this immense library of work would require changes of mass proportion and distinction. Otherwise, you're fixing something that isn't broken and passing along expensive costs to the consumer for almost no reason.

The battle cry instilled into many DMs regarding the wash of new material was "if you don't like it, change it," and I, for one, bought into it. I think many other gamers did too. We have been changing it, and frankly we don't need TSR to fix it for us. If you create a new set of core books just to correct what's wrong with encumbrance, then you are taking advantage of the loyalty of your long-time fans. The counterpoint isn't any better: if you change everything, then you've bastardized the game into something that isn't the AD&D game.

Consistency: Half of the AD&D world is collecting the *Wizard's Spell Compendium*. Do not tell me they are wasting their money on something that will be obsolete in a year. These long-term investments should stand up to the test of time. Between ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™ and the soon-to-come *Priest's Spell Compendium*, the game is finally reaching the levels of organization required to hold together a system of such magnitude. To undermine such efforts of logic and hard work before they are even completed is ludicrous.

Objectively, the AD&D game is far from perfect, but it does continue to be the number one selling game on the market. This illustrates that there is something *right* about it. I challenge anyone to name three things so desperately bad about the rules (that can't be easily changed or discarded) that a published rewrite is warranted.

To sum up, Wizards of the Coast may well have the enthusiasm and the deep pocketbook to drive forth a new edition of the AD&D game, but I really don't think it's worth doing. The costs would be substantial, perhaps even prohibitive, to newer players. Minor changes do not substantiate these costs, and larger ones undermine the nature of the game we so enjoy. Lastly, the system is popular, indicating the positive course it already takes. Simply put, I think there is much more to be lost than to be gained.

Doug Ironside
Midland, Ontario

Leave Every Option

As I was thinking about the question "what optional rules do I never use?" I realized that the question should have been "what optional rules do you not want to see again?" It seems to me that AD&D has taken on an identity of its own to many people. In short, I think it would be a shame to take out optional rules, because one never knows when they will be useful. I'd rather pay $30 for a 3rd Edition book that is packed with optional rules than $20 or $25 for a book that leaves me looking in my 2nd Edition books for information.

My own case is a good example. I read other fantasy roleplaying games and was liking one because it was very oriented toward magic. I was thinking, "Why can't I do this in AD&D?" So I started looking, and in *Spells & Magic* I found suggestions on how to do what I was thinking about. I haven't used the rule before, but I might now.

In short, I don't think there should be any cutting. AD&D should borrow from its own products. *DRAGON Magazine* has had some of the best options (like "The Laws of Spell Design" in issue #242). *Netheril: Empire of Magic* has the most realistic spell system for magic. Wizards and priests have more choices about how they expend magical energies; they no longer receive three first level, two second level spells, etc. Wizards of the Coast should be including more of the great options that allow players the flexibility to make their gaming world to their liking. If they did that, they would make the best fantasy roleplaying game even better!

Dana Aquadro
Walpole, NH

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By Skip Williams

This month, the Sage unravels some knotty magical problems for AD&D® game players.

Does a sha'ir's spell casting cause defiling on Athas? I suppose this would depend on whether the sha'ir's gen brought the power to cast the spell or just brought the spell.

Spell casters who have not studied defiling function as preservers on Athas—thanks to the fairly structured manner in which they cast their spells. Wild mages, whose spellcasting powers are notoriously unstructured, are an exception. Any spell that causes a wild surge also causes defiling. There is nothing a wild mage can do about that, short of abandoning wild magic for preserving. (See *Defilers and Preservers: The Wizards of Athas*, page 29, for details.)

In any case, gens only bring their sha'irs spells; any local conditions that govern spell casting or the effects of spells still apply to sha'irs when they cast their spells.

A *wall of force* is unaffected by many things. Can it be beaten down physically? If so, how much damage can it sustain?

No purely physical attack can harm a *wall of force*.

A high Intelligence score makes a creature immune to illusions of a certain level. Is this based on the spell level or the level of the spell caster?

It's based on the spell level as it appears on the wizard spell list.

The witch kit from the *Complete Wizard's Handbook* allows characters to choose magical items for equipment, but only refers to items listed in the *Dungeon Master® Guide*. What sorts of items from the *Encyclopedia Magica™* tome could a witch choose?

Look at the random item tables in *Encyclopedia Magica* Volume 4. A witch could start play with 1,500 gp worth of items from tables A, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, and Q.

I would like a copy of whatever you use to decide what level a spell is and such.

Currently, the only such material in print (officially) is the discussion of spell research in Chapter 7 of the *DMG*.

Check out "The Laws of Spell Design" in *Dragon Magazine* #242 (December, 1997) for an excellent treatment of the subject.

***Antimagic shell* blocks not only all magic but all psionics as well. However, what happens if a powerful psionicist uses the Subjective Reality power? Can a psionicist use Subjective Reality to ignore all wizardly magic and so ignore *antimagic shell*? Or would the *antimagic shell* act as a sort of island of reality within the psionicist's disbelief?**

Subjective Reality negates things only from the psionicist's perspective. For example, if a psionicist chose to ignore all wizardly magic, she ignores the effects of a *lightning bolt* spell, but her companions don't. In the case of *antimagic shell*, the psionicist's powers and items could function within the shell. Effects from the character's powers or items could even pass through the shell but still could not affect anything inside the shell. (For everyone else, the shell is still there protecting them.) For example, if the psionicist is within an *antimagic shell*, Subjective Reality would allow her to use the Death Field power, but the power could harm only creatures who were outside the *antimagic shell*.

Does a dual-classed or multiclassed fighter—say, a fighter/wizard—receive a saving throw vs. the *chaos* spell?

Multiclassed or dual-classed characters receive no saving throws vs. *chaos*, except in the case of dual-classed fighter/enchanters, unless they're more powerful than the spell caster (see next question).

Does the priest spell *free action* protect against the wizard spell *chaos*? If not, what spells would help against this over-powerful spell?

No. *Free action* keeps the recipient from being trapped, slowed, or otherwise restricted in some physical manner. *Chaos* just messes up the recipient's head. Very little protects against a *chaos* spell. A *chaos* spell's area of effect cannot extend into an area protected by an *antimagic shell*. A *scarab of protection* allows anyone at least a slight chance of making a successful saving throw against the spell. Effects that shield the recipient's mind from attack can be effective. *The mind blank* spell, for example, provides complete protection.

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Note that unintelligent creatures (those with Intelligence scores of 4 or less) with no magical abilities, wizards specializing in the enchantment/charm school, and creatures with more levels or hit dice than the *chaos* caster always receive saving throws. Note also that creatures affected by a *chaos* spell are far from helpless. They can defend themselves normally if attacked and might well attack the spell caster or his party if they stray too close. *Chaos* is effective for deterring pursuit or distracting guards, but it does not guarantee victory in a fight.

CAN TRUE DWEOMERS be channeled into focal stones (from *Volo's Guide to All Things Magical*)?

Does the third-level wizard or priest spell *dispel magic* do all of the three functions (dispelling spells and spell-like effects, disrupting spell casting, and rendering magical items inert) each time it is used? Let's imagine a character who has received a *stoneskin* spell, carries a *ring of invisibility*, a *scroll of protection against fire*, and is in the process of casting a *magic missile* spell. Let's say she's also standing in an area enchanted with *Evard's black tentacles*. If someone casts a *dispel magic* in the area, what happens? Must the caster specify the target of the spell? What happens to the magical items? And to the *stoneskin* spell? And *Evard's black tentacles*? And to the *magic missile* the character is right now casting?

All three functions never happen at once. *Dispel magic* can be cast on a whole area, or on a single creature or object. If cast on an area, any spell or spell-like effect within that area is subject to dispelling. Attempts at spell casting are disrupted with the *dispel magic's* area of effect as well. Magical items and spell effects made permanent with the *permanency* spell are not subject to area dispels. Certain other effects (such as *walls of force* and *antimagic shells*) are not subject to *dispel magic* at all; check the individual spell descriptions to be sure.

A *dispel magic* cast directly on an object affects only that object; there is no area of effect. A direct casting can dispel a permanent effect or render a magical item temporarily (1d4 rounds) nonmagical. Note that *dispel magic* can disrupt only one item or permanent effect a time.

Your example specifies an area dispel, so the magical items remain unaffected. The *magic missile* spell is disrupted. The *stoneskin* and *Evard's black tentacles* effects could be dispelled; the *dispel magic* caster gets to roll against each of the two spells. If the *dispel magic* caster had decided to target the *ring of invisibility*, only the ring would be affected. In that case, there would be no roll to see if the ring stops functioning for 1d4 rounds, but the wearer could attempt a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effect. See *High-Level Campaigns*, Chapter 3, for details.

Can true dweomers be channeled into focal stones (from *Volo's Guide to All Things Magical*)?

No. True dweomers cannot be held or stored.

The *weighty chest* spell from the *Tome of Magic* works on any non-living object no larger than a 5' cube, making the object weigh two to five times the weight of any person (other than caster) or creature touching it. The spell description gives no saving throw for the object. If the object is already in the possession of another creature (such as a weapon or a boot), does the object then get a save? If so, does the creature make the saving throw or does the item make a saving throw from the item saving throw table?

Unattended items do not receive saving throws vs. *weighty chest*. The spell doesn't work if cast on an item already in a creature's possession.

Is there anything to stop wizards from summoning horses using the first-level *mount* spell and selling them to horse traders? Is there anything about a horse created with this spell that might warn off a buyer? Other than the fact that the buyer would be a little angry that his newly purchased horse just disappeared, what is to stop them?

A simple *detect magic* will reveal the presence of a spell. A successful use of the spellcraft proficiency also reveals that the mount was created with magic.

Also, any horse trader who's been in the business more than a year or two probably will be on the lookout for *mount* spell scams. An experienced trader will insist on keeping any mount offered for sale at least 24 hours before paying up. Disreputable traders might disappear with the mounts from time to time, even when the mounts are the real thing.

What happens when you cast *feather fall* on a flying creature or a propelled object?

There's very little effect on a flying creature unless there's wind (such as a *gust of wind* spell) to push it around. The spell negates the effects of diving. The creature can still fly downward at its normal rate, but it loses any attack, damage, and movement bonuses it would otherwise gain from diving.

A propelled object (such as an arrow) misses its target if subjected to *feather fall*.

How does a *ring of x-ray vision* work? I mean, I have some problem dealing with the penalties it gives and how long the wearer can use it before losing Constitution. Is the Constitution loss permanent?

Just note how often the character uses the ring. If it has been less than an hour since the last time the character has used the ring, the character loses one point of Constitution. If the character uses the ring twice in that same period of time, he loses two points of Constitution. Each full turn (10 minutes) of use counts as an extra use. That is, if a character spends 30 minutes continually scanning with the ring, that counts as three uses and three points of Constitution loss.

As noted in the item description, Constitution loss is temporary. The character does not recover automatically. If the character does nothing but rest, he can recover two points of lost Constitution each day.

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After reading "Magic Resistance, Step By Step" in *Dragon Magazine* #218, I conclude that the *guards and wards* spell is an in-place effect. Only some portions of the spell affect a creature directly. If a magic-resistant creature successfully rolls its magic resistance against the *stinking cloud*, *web*, or *confusion* effects of the spell, which affect it in a very direct manner, the whole spell collapses. Right? But nothing of this sort happens if a resistant creature doesn't see correctly due to the mist effect, for the mist affects only the air of the place. Right?

You're right about the mist effect. It makes the air hard to see through, and magic resistance does not apply.

A player character in my campaign launched a *fireball* at a succubus. Succubi are immune to fire. The player still demanded a knockdown die (from the *Spells & Magic* book). His logic: even if the target is immune to the fire, the force of the blast might knock her down. I agreed with that. Then the player (figuring he was a position to make the *fireball* really do something against the succubus) said since the *fireball* burns up air, the succubus might be dazed when all the air comes rushing in. (The character was a 14th-level mage, so the *fireball* was big). I said no. He went on about the light affecting her vision, the ground getting burned and her falling in, etc. Did I make the right call?

A *fireball* produces almost no pressure, so there's no significant shock or blast. The effect certainly depletes oxygen, but the area would have to be very small—and airtight—for the effect to be at all noticeable. In any case, a *fireball* doesn't create a vacuum, nor does a *fireball* produce enough light to cause a daze effect—if it did, these effects would be listed in the spell description. In any case, fire immunity would also grant immunity to such special effects. (A knockdown still could happen, though.)

Note that a 14th-level mage doesn't cast a "big" fireball. A *fireball's* size does not vary with the caster level. It also never inflicts more than 10d6 hp damage, no matter what the caster's level.

Your example illustrates the perils of quoting rules during play. It spoils the mood and invites arguments. The next time something like that happens, don't say: "Succubi are immune to fire!" Just say the *fireball* goes off with a whoosh, leaving behind a slightly singed, slightly amused (or maybe slightly miffed) succubus. (Assuming, of course, that the character in question even knows he's facing a succubus; succubi don't exactly wear name tags that say "I'm a succubus, and I'm immune to fire.") Let the player figure out what's going on all by himself.

IF A PC PUTS TWO *CURSED* RINGS on one hand, what happens?

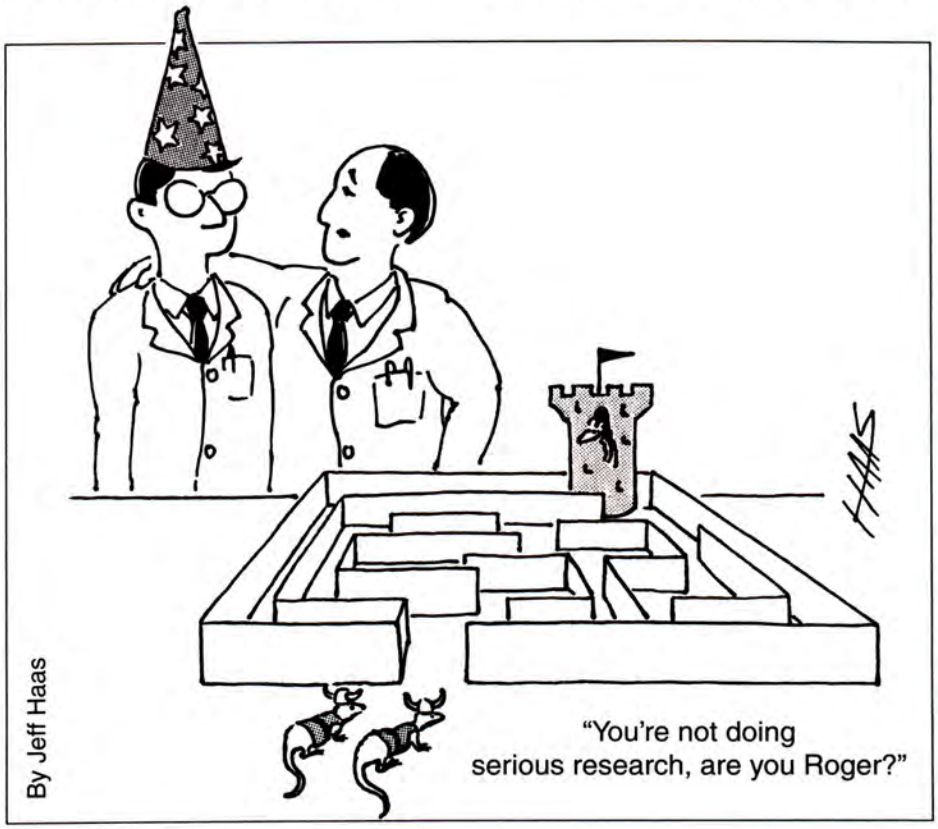
Guards and wards creates numerous in-place effects within its area; it is not a single in-place effect. A successful magic resistance roll, when it applies at all, applies only to the specific portion of the effect that triggered the roll. *Stinking cloud* and *web* are indeed in-place effects. If a magic resistance roll succeeds against one, only that particular *web* or *stinking cloud* collapses, leaving the rest of the *guards and wards* effect in place.

Recently in a campaign, a PC came across two *cursed* rings. Now, to my knowledge, wearing two magical rings on the same hand cancels the effect of each ring. If a PC puts two *cursed* rings on one hand, what happens? Or if he puts a magical ring and a *cursed* ring on the same hand, what happens? Do the effects cancel out or not?

The first cursed ring's effect isn't canceled, but the second cursed ring doesn't work either.

Can you suggest a limit on the number of insects a priest could control at once with the fourth-level spell *giant insect*? I realize a priest of 7th level or higher probably has better things to do than sit around casting this spell all day, but because of its permanent duration, he could amass a decent army in a few weeks (or at least enough to make the party fighter feel inadequate).

There's no limit. The permanent duration, however, is an error. The correct duration for the spell is two rounds per caster level.



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Page 17 of the *Book of Chaos* (from the *Planes of Chaos* boxed set) states that Elemental spells require access to the Inner Planes, so they don't function in the Abyss. Does this mean that any fire-based spell (such as a *fireball*) will not work or that only spells requiring a planar pathway to the inner plane (such as conjure fire elemental) will not work?

The latter is the case. Invocation/Evocation spells such as *fireball* usually work fine in the Abyss.

Can a *staff of the magi* produce the reversed form of the *enlarge* spell? What about other wands, staves, and rods? Can they produce the reversed forms of whatever spell-like powers they have?

No. Unless an item's description says otherwise, an item produces only one form of any power it has. For example, a *staff of the magi* can produce *protection from evil* or *protection from good*, but not *darkness* or *reduce*.

If someone casts *heat metal* spell on a blade coated with drow poison and the wielder continues to use the blade, will the searing heat from the spell destroy the poison? If so, in which round will the poison be completely destroyed?

The DM is free to decide. I'd recommend that the poison boil or bake off when the blade reached searing heat (on the third round of the spell's effect).

If a wizard uses a *potion of vitality*, does that mean she can re-memorize spells whenever she wants?

Potions of vitality do not speed spell recovery. The potion makes sleep unnecessary, however, and the character can recover spells after any period of quiet rest, say six to eight hours. For example, the character could keep watch through the night and still get spells back in the morning, provided the night's rest was uneventful.

Do *ioun stones* still float around the owner's face if the character lies down? If character is killed and falls to the ground do the *ioun stones* keep floating and functioning?

This is up to the DM. *Ioun stones* must circle the user to be effective and they certainly can do so if the user is prone, supine, or dead. The stones don't necessarily float around the head. Many DMs assume they orbit the top of the head, like a halo. They could just as easily circle the chest.

I know DMs who say that a dead character cannot "use" ioun stones, and that any stones orbiting the character stop and fall to the ground the moment the character expires. (They might also just hover in the air over the body.) Many DMs do not allow *ioun stones* to function while the user lies down. There's no rule at work here, just personal preference. The DM should decide how ioun stones work in his campaign and adjudicate their use accordingly.

Skip Williams reports that he pronounces the word "ioun" as a single syllable "uwwn" (rhymes with "dune") which his gaming group back in the "old days" preferred over the more common two-syllable "EYE-oon." Skip confesses that he has no idea where the "uwwn" pronunciation came from but notes that old habits die hard.

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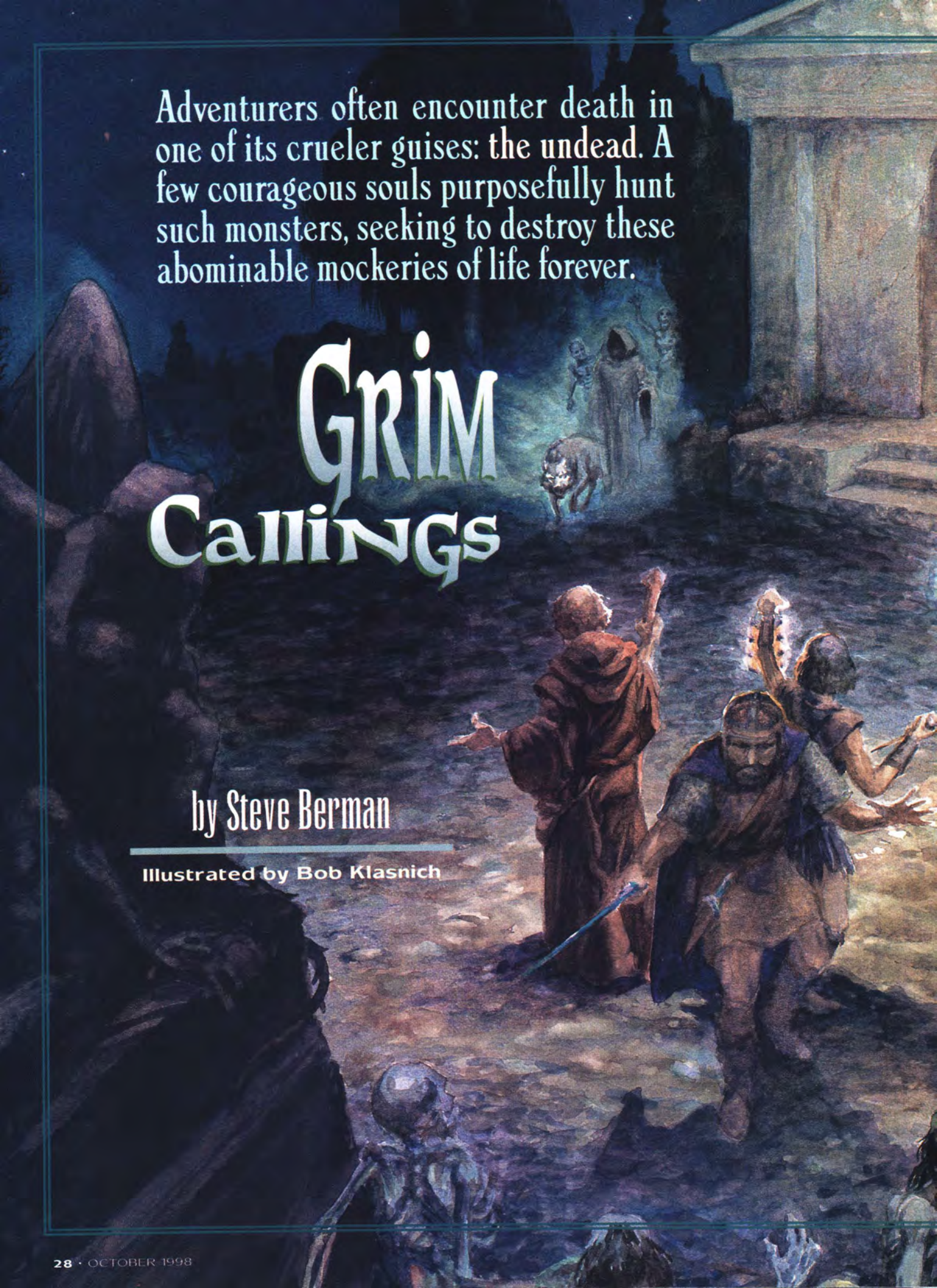


Adventurers often encounter death in one of its crueler guises: the undead. A few courageous souls purposefully hunt such monsters, seeking to destroy these abominable mockeries of life forever.

Grim Callings

by Steve Berman

Illustrated by Bob Klasnich

The Veil

Three centuries ago, a noble knight named Aravan saw his liege fall to the life-draining touch of a wraith. Aravan barely managed to defeat the dreadful horror. Afterward, he pledged over his master's corpse that he would not rest until the lands were free of such evil. The knight called in favors from both clergy and landowners. By the following winter, Aravan had sufficient resources and enough loyal men to create an order to protect the innocent from foul undead. The Order of the Veil, named for the thin border separating life from the afterlife, quickly became one of the most prestigious knightly orders in the land.

All was well for almost one hundred years, and Lord Aravan lived to a venerable age. With his passing, however, problems arose. A schism manifested among some of the priests who were aiding the paladins. Some believed that undead were victims, unwillingly trapped in their horrid state; they argued for gentle means of releasing the accursed souls. Calling themselves Letheans, this benevolent sect left the order and followed their own path in dealing with the undead.

This secession was not the worst blow to the order. A worse catastrophe came from the moribunds. As the Order of the Veil became more prestigious, Aravan's successors invited certain mages to assist the order. Many of the other paladins were mistrustful of magic, especially necromantic spells, but they were bound by honor to accept the decision of their superiors. This obedience proved to be their undoing, as a band of mages researching the source of the undead's power uncovered something remarkable: the very energies of death could be harnessed to extend a man's life! So were born the first moribunds, necromancers who covet the negative energies of the undead.

The moribunds spread their learning and openly hunted the undead for their own foul research. Word of the moribunds' activities spread, and they became a source of fear and horror to the common people. The primary patrons of the Veil, the nobility and the church, did not wish to be linked to such dark practices and withdrew support, even condemning the knights who once welcomed the moribunds. The Order of the Veil was ordered to disband, or its members would face arrest and inquisition. All complied publicly, denouncing not only the moribunds who had strayed from the original tenets of the Veil, but also renouncing the order itself and its noble founder. Officially, the order was dead.

A few of the most loyal paladins knew that their war against the undead must continue, so they met in secret, vowing that the Veil would live so long as they remained to defend it. So were born the modern Keepers of the Veil. Their numbers have remained small through the years, but their deeds and spirit are great.

Customs

The Keepers of the Veil have adopted notable countersigns for recognition. Members make a gesture of momentarily covering the face with both hands, as if sobbing, when greeting another member. If at a tavern, it is customary to order a small cup of wine or ale in addition to the keeper's own drink; this second cup remains untouched, as it is for the many members of the Veil who have fallen in battle against the undead. Keepers usually have hanging around their necks a small black velvet pouch containing a piece of bone or a stone from their first battle with the undead.

Keeper of the Veil (Paladin)

Description: The Keepers of the Veil are a brotherhood of paladins charged with destroying ghosts and other malignant spirits. They also seek to ensure that the souls of the faithful reach their intended afterlife unmolested.

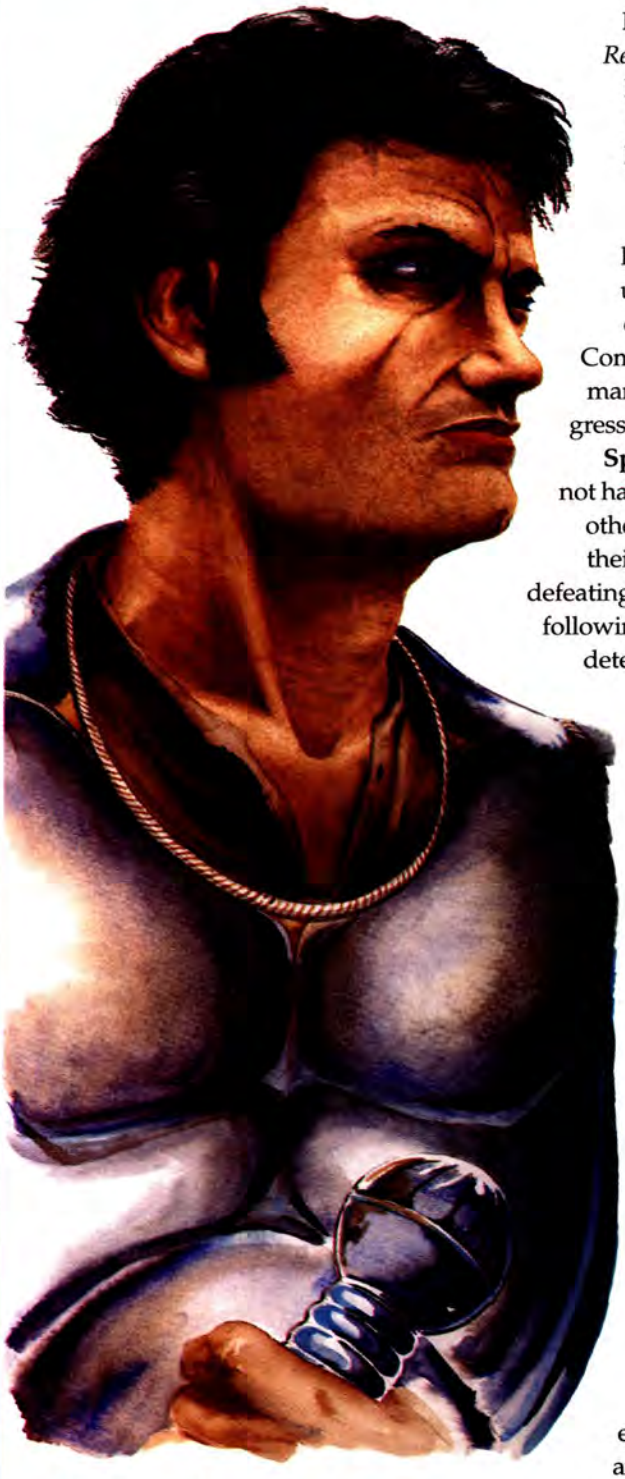
Keepers are introverted and have difficulty relating to others outside of a professional or courteous environment. While they must keep their allegiance to the Veil a secret, such paladins are affected by their constant exposure to death and the dying. They know that at any moment they could be called to the side of a dying comrade to defend his soul. A keeper's teachings are full of references to keeping one emotion's locked within, detaching oneself from relationships of the heart. A keeper risks much pain if he develops any serious relationship with another. However, not all these men and women are loners; many have a few adventuring companions. However, keepers have difficulty sharing deep-seated emotions with even trusted friends. This has led to the misconception that keepers are stonehearted.

Role: As they are few in number and secretive, keeper fortresses are rare and always well hidden from outsiders. In such sanctity, a keeper might briefly rest before riding out to once more engage the feral undead, keep his family protected within the stone walls, and, should he live long enough, impart his experience to the next generation of brave warriors.

One of a keeper's most notable abilities is the guardianship of departing souls. Even newly vested paladins can protect a serf's spirit, and the more powerful members of the Veil will stand watch over a corpse for days if need be to ensure the soul travels unmolested across the Astral Plane.

Because of such training, a keeper respects ceremony, especial funeral rites. The Veil is accepting of any culture's mortuary practices as long as they are not disrespectful to the departed. They never refuse taking part in such rites; the surest way to offend a keeper is to exclude him from a funeral.

When a keeper arrives in any city or settlement, before he tends to himself or



his steed, he first visits the local cemetery. (If the area has more than one, he visits them all.) For a few minutes he stands at the lychgate, stretching out his senses and searching for the presence of evil. If at all possible, he returns later that night to ensure that no undead creatures prowl the area.

A keeper must meet the characteristic and alignment requirements of any paladin.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Any.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Endurance, undead lore. *Recommended:* Ancient history, ancient languages, local history, reading/writing, riding, and religion.

Spheres of Influence: A keeper can cast priest spells upon reaching 9th level. He can cast spells of the Astral, Combat, Guardian, and Necromantic spheres only. Spell progression is the same as paladins.

Special Benefits: Keepers do not have all the standard benefits other paladins possess. Rather, their faith is channeled toward defeating undead. Keepers have the following normal paladin abilities: detect evil intent, saving throw bonuses, aura of protection, holy sword use, turning undead, and calling for mount. They cannot heal wounds or *cure disease*.

At 3rd level, the keeper's faith is strong enough to inflict harm on undead immune to normal weaponry (such as shadows and wights). Any weapon in the keeper's hands is considered a +1 weapon for attack purposes. At 6th level, the keeper's faith is even purer, and he may attack any undead that would normally be resistant to weapons below +2 enchantment. At 12th level, any weapon in the paladin's hands is treated as a +3 weapon for purposes of determining what can be hit.

A keeper can *remove fear* to any person touched, including himself. This power may be invoked 1/day at 1st level, 2/day at 3rd level, 3/day at 5th level, and so on.

A keeper can also *restore strength* to a victim suffering from the draining touch of shadows, including himself. The keeper's touch restores 1d4 + 1 points of lost Strength. This power can be used 1/day at 2nd level, 2/day at 4th level, 3/day and 6th level, and so on.

Keepers are best known for the Soul Watch. It is their personal honor and duty to ensure that the souls of the dying ascend safely to the Upper Planes. The ability may be invoked around any recently slain corpse (no more than once per day per level of the paladin) or dying person of good alignment and of no higher level than the keeper's current experience.

As the Soul Watch begins, the keeper's vision extends into the Astral Plane (as per the spell *astral awareness*), and he may extend his melee attacks into the Astral Plane to strike any monster threatening the soul. This does not negate the special defenses of a creature, so the keeper might require a magical weapon to inflict harm (though undead creatures on that plane are still vulnerable to the keeper's special ability as noted above). Of course, the paladin is also vulnerable to attacks by astral creatures. Only melee attacks, not missile or spells, may be launched at the creature.

Onlookers who do not possess the magical means for seeing into the Astral Plane watch a bizarre combat, with the keeper's attacks looking like pantomime and any wounds dealt him appearing as if inflicted by an invisible assailant.

Special Hindrances: The benefits of a Keeper of the Veil are different from that of other paladins—more toward dealing with the undead, especially incorporeal creatures. A keeper's turning ability does not affect fiends. The keeper also lacks the laying on hands and *cure disease* abilities.

A keeper must keep his association with the Veil a guarded secret. Though many of the grievances against the old order have been forgotten, it is a matter of personal faith and trust that the paladin's allegiance is kept hidden. Failure to do so would result in a loss of all abilities. Of course, the keepers have the same strict restrictions upon them in the matters of alignment, ethics, and possessions as other paladins.

Wealth Options: 3d6 × 10gp (but can only retain bare necessities after initial purchases).

Dirgist (Bard)

Description: The dirgist is a rare bard specializing in funeral songs, requiems, and ancient elegies. Their lyrics and music are so evocative that few can hear them play without crying, and even the undead are quieted by returned memories. Dirgists have little knowledge or patience for light ditties or merriment and are usually as gloomy as the tunes the play.

The garb of a typical dirgist is somber, black being the normal color, complimented with brown and dark gray. With none of the usual finery associated with bards, it is easy to mistake a dirgist with any mourner except for the presence of an instrument.

Most dirgists are humans, as that race fears the threat of death foremost compared to the long-living demihumans. A few half-elves feel the dread of their human parent enough to ignore their elven blood and raise their voice in lament.

Role: The dirgist keeps alive the macabre and morbid songs of the ages. Rarely are they sought out for anything other than state funerals and memorial services (where the officials want the crowd to be moved to tears). Some spend time at monasteries, providing their music and voice to somber hymns.

Like all bards, a dirgist must be some neutral alignment. Many are lawful neutral, seeking to preserve the rites and tales of the past and considering the undead a chaotic force that needs to be quelled. The Veil has taken a few of the nobler dirgists into counsel, but such an honor is only gained after ordeals of faith and courage. Some keepers have only found solace through the haunting music of these bards, but not all dirgists have such intent, and there are some who have let themselves be corrupted by their songs until they seek out the entourage of powerful necromancers or spread grief throughout the land on their own.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Any.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Ancient history, musical instrument, singing. *Recommended:* Ancient languages, local history, undead lore. It should be noted that most musical instruments are inappropriate for dirgists in that they produce a light sound. A beginning dirgist can choose to be skilled at any two of the following instruments (later on in his career, he may master more): any drum, any low woodwind (such as an oboe), bagpipes, organ, low bell or chime, gong, animal horn.

Rogue Skill Progression: Dirgists would do best increasing their Move Silently and Hide in Shadows thieving talents. This would lessen the danger of exploring old tombs.

Special Benefits: Dirgists are infamous for their ability to enthrall the undead with song. Whenever the bard encounters any undead creature, he may attempt to captivate it. The creature is not truly *charmed* but instead held in thrall as distant memories from its past life return. The dirgist must succeed in either a singing or musical instrument proficiency check. Only undead with Hit Dice equivalent to or lower than the dirgist's level can be enthralled. The proficiency check is modified as follows:

❖ Against mindless undead (skeletons, zombies, and the like), the dirgist must strain to reach their lost memories and suffers a –2 penalty to his roll.

❖ If more than a single undead is targeted, there is a –1 modifier for each additional creature.

❖ If the dirgist's level is at least double that of the undead's hit dice, he gains a +2 modifier to his roll; if his level is triple or greater, this modifier becomes +4.

❖ Foreknowledge can help the dirgist. If he has discovered the history behind the undead he faces, through rumor or the ancient/local history proficiency, he can use one of the songs in his repertoire that has personal meaning to the undead. This gives a +2 bonus to the roll.

Enthralled undead simply stand still as if in a daze. Any attack (physical or magical) that causes a malignant effect upon the captivated creature instantly breaks the song's hold. The dirgist can sing and hold the undead in thrall up to a number of rounds equal to his Constitution. Once he stops, the song's effects last a further 1d3 rounds.

Dirgists are also naturally resistant to the effects of *fear* magic. At 1st level, they gain a +1 on all saving throws versus *fear* spells or creature effects. This bonus is increased by an additional +1 for every four levels of experience the bard attains.

At 5th level, a dirgist is immune to the effects of a banshee's wail. Any other vocal special attacks by undead creatures (excluding spell use) also have no effect on the dirgist.

At 9th level, the dirgist is so accomplished that his songs and music may not only enthrall the undead but also affect those skilled in necromantic magic. Thus, necromancers and specialty priests of necromantic powers might also fall under the enchantment.

Special Hindrances: Dirgists are a morose lot. They are not the sort of bard skilled at entertaining rowdy crowds with drinking songs or thrilling ballads. Any attempt by a dirgist to play or sing something lively or uplifting suffers a –6 penalty on the appropriate proficiency check. A dirgist is usually only welcome company at funerals and memorial services. A dirgist must constantly travel to seek out ancient requiems and coronaches to add to his repertoire. To advance past 3rd level, the bard must visit ancient mausoleums and sepulchers, explore necropoli, and even seek the knowledge of powerful necromancers. Before each new level is attained, the character must again explore grim surroundings.

Wealth Options: 5d4 × 10gp

Lethean (Priest)

Description: The letheans are a rare sect of priests that hold the soul sacred and believe that it is an incorruptible force. However, the soul may become dormant or forgotten, and the flesh surrounding it can suffer with ills and sins because of this. A vibrant soul ascends to the Upper Planes when its host expires. A dormant soul becomes trapped with the corpse and must be freed. Even worse, the flesh and bone might become tainted by negative essences and walk the land as undead. The dormant soul still dwells within the creature, and the letheans are driven to release a trapped soul so that it returns to the Blessed Realms.

Letheans have a few temples scattered around the land, but they are a small sect. They do not worship a god but rather the power of the soul. The Upper Planes are the holy repository for such forces and with faith, a lethean may tap into such power to help others. Of course, others—even the ones who profess to be knowledgeable on matters of the spirit—often react to such theology with scorn. The letheans have learned to endure such derision; they see their purpose too holy to be swayed by the heathen ignorant.

Role: Letheans do a great deal of missionary work, traveling the land hoping to instill in others a sense of health and well-being. Their day is full of lengthy prayers, with a good deal of physical exercise. When necessary, a priest depends upon the hospitality of others, offering guidance and occasional workings of magic in return for room and board.

When word of the undead reaches the ears of a lethean, she bristles with purpose and departs with all due haste to locate the creature(s) and rescue the trapped souls.

Letheans must be lawful good in alignment. Though most letheans are human (elves seem unable to understand their theology, and halflings nearly faint at the strict regimen), of late a number of dwarves have taken up the faith, enjoying the strenuous lifestyle.

Weapon Proficiencies: Letheans are not trained for combat. They are restricted in their initial pick of weapon proficiencies to a simple quarterstaff. Later on in her adventuring career, a lethean may choose to learn any one-handed, light weapon.

Duties of Priest: Funeral, Guidance. Letheans always attend funeral services, offering comfort to the mourners. They also preach how the soul must be kept vibrant through faith and healthy practices. Sick and wounded individuals should be healed, first in spirit, then in flesh.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Religion, undead lore. *Recommended:* Ancient history, ceremony, investigation, local history, reading/writing.

Spheres of Influence: Major: All, Astral, Healing, Necromantic, Wards. Minor: Divination, Protection. Though they have access to Necromantic spells, a lethean would never use her magic to create undead or inflict damage upon a living being.

Special Benefits: Though letheans use the normal turn undead chart, the end result is different from other clerics' power. These priests are not seeking to chase away creatures but rather awaken the dormant souls within them. Should the die roll indicate a successful turn, the affected undead stops any current action and wanders off aimlessly at the end of the round. The lethean has only touched the trapped soul but was unable to fully waken the spirit. A die roll that would normally destroy the undead creature does so with spectacular results. Around the midsection of each affected undead appears a glow that slowly rises and brightens. On the following round, before anyone or anything can react, the trapped souls are awakened and liberated, shooting up into the sky and consuming the foul undead imprisoning them. All good-aligned creatures watching this display feel suddenly inspired and, for the rest of that day, make all saving throws versus *fear* and death magic at +1. This effect is not cumulative.

Letheans are not as afraid of death as others and receive a +2 on all saving throws versus magical and natural *fear*. When a lethean reaches 9th level, she becomes immune to *fear*.

Special Hindrances: Letheans lead strict lives to ensure that their souls do not fall into slumber so that their flesh suffers. Food is consumed in moderation, with everything being well cooked as fire is a reminder of the soul's light and smoke rising to the heavens is an inspiration. Alcohol is allowed, but only distilled spirits and nothing base like beer or ale. Slothful behavior is decidedly frowned upon: no lethean sleeps more than five hours, let alone naps during the daylight hours. A lapse in this lifestyle (even if due to some enchantment) is considered a minor transgression, and the priest may suffer a penalty to his rolls or the inability to cast a minor spell until he has atoned.

Some letheans proselytize others to adopt their habits, if not their faith.

Wealth Options: 2d8 × 10gp

New Priest Spells

Funeral Ward
(Abjuration, Necromancy)
Level: 2
Sphere: Wards
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 corpse
Saving Throw: Neg.

The *funeral ward* is an abjuration placed over any corpse, and the length of time the target has been deceased is irrelevant. Any attempt to *animate* the body as undead requires the offending spellcaster to make a saving throw vs. spells to succeed. Should he fail, he can only make further attempts with a different necromantic spell. (Thus, if an evil necromancer fails to succeed with an *animate dead* spell on the corpse, he may try at some later date to cast *create watchghost*, but he must make another saving throw.) Should the corpse rise as undead, the *funeral ward* has a lasting effect: any attempt to turn the creature receives a +1 bonus.

At the end of the invocation, the material component—a holy symbol of the lethean's faith—is left atop the corpse for at least one full evening (four hours minimum). Removing the symbol at a later time does not adversely affect the spell.

Spirit Binding
(Necromancy)
Level: 4
Sphere: Necromantic
Range: 20 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: See below
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 undead creature
Saving Throw: See below

Spirit binding causes a noncorporeal undead creature to be trapped wherever the spell is cast. The required material component is either a coffin nail or a shard of stone from a crypt or gravesite.

The caster takes the material component and pounds it into the earth while chanting the words to the spell. The undead must make a saving throw. A material component taken from the exact tomb where the creature's body was interred imposes a –4 penalty yo the saving throw. Should the roll fail, the creature cannot travel more than 20 feet from where the nail/shard is embedded, cannot touch the component, and cannot flee to the Astral or Ethereal Plane. A successful save means the undead creature has struggled and succeeded in throwing off the spell but still suffers 2d6 hp damage.

The spell persists for as long as the nail or spike remains embedded in the earth, or until a successful *dispel magic* has been cast upon the site. No undead creature can dig up the hammered nail or shard, though any living being can do so. A natural event such as a minor quake, erosion, or the like might also free the trapped undead.

Only noncorporeal undead are affected by *spirit binding*. As sunlight is an anathema to the undead, a creature held outside most likely perishes come day (DM's decision) unless it can somehow hide from the sun. Vampires in *gaseous form* are susceptible to this spell.

Moribund (Necromancer)

Description: Many a mage has attempted to use unhealthy magic to extend life and power. The moribunds are notorious for such zeal. Through dire research, these wizards have discovered a means for forestalling death by sapping emanations from the Negative Material Plane. Energy from the Plane of Unlife oddly quells their body's natural decline. The prime sources of such emanations on the Prime Material Plane are the undead. So moribunds have become predators of the unliving.

Only humans may become moribunds. A minimum Intelligence of 11 and Wisdom of 16 for the kit is required.

Role: These necromancers rarely stay in a single area for more than a month unless they are conducting arcane research or trying to excavate old burial grounds. Their yearning for the energies of the Negative Material Plane means they must constantly uncover lairs of the undead. While most of these necromancers are so self-centered that they dwell apart from society, some have come to realize that associating with other adventurers while hunting the undead is both useful and wise. There is even a minority of good-aligned moribunds who have misgivings over what harm their predecessors did to the old order and wish to mend the rift. They face great prejudice however, and most Keepers of the Veil are hard-pressed to trust them.

Most moribunds are chaotic neutral and selfish; any benefit to the world in ridding the land of undead is incidental to their needs. The few good moribunds who do exist must always be careful or fall prey to corruption. Evil moribunds are merciless hunters, and any innocents who get in the way of the search for old crypts and tombs are in danger.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Dart, dagger, staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Sage knowledge (Inner Planes), undead lore. *Recommended:* Ancient lore, ancient languages, reading/writing, spellcraft.

Special Benefits: Moribunds are specialists in the school of Necromancy, using their talents to draw upon negative energies. They possess all the traditional benefits of specialist wizards (additional spell memorization, saving throw bonuses, and so forth).

Through their training, moribunds have learned to siphon off some of the negative essence possessed by the undead. They need only touch the undead to do this, and even noncorporeal undead (though not vampires in *gaseous form*) can be affected. The moribund's touch is considered an attack against AC 10, modified by any special magical protections the undead creature might possess. The undead creature loses 1 hp for every level of the moribund. These points are added to the mage's total, with any hit points over the moribund's normal total treated as temporary additional hit points (but see Risk of Corruption below). An undead utterly drained by the mage crumbles into dust. The extra hit points fade at a rate of 1 hp per hour.

While he remains uncorrupted, a moribund is entitled to a saving throw vs. any undead creature's special attacks, including energy drain. Against draining attacks, the moribund makes a saving throw vs. death magic. Spell use is not resisted, a moribund would be as vulnerable to a lich's magic as any other.

Special Hindrances: As specialists of the school of Necromancy, a moribund cannot cast spells of Enchantment/ Charm or Illusion. This may explain why such mages often have poor dealings with normal folk, as they are unable to magically influence commoners without brutal fear tactics.

Because of their exposure to the Negative Material Plane, moribunds can only heal their wounds through time (regaining no more than 1 hp/day no matter how fine the conditions or ministrations by others) or by draining the essence of the undead. Curative spells, restorative potions, and magical items have no effect on a moribund. Drinking a potion of *undead control* (since it is made from the remains of such creatures) restores 3d8+3 hp damage to the moribund.

New Wizard Spells

All beginning moribunds learn the spell *detect undead*. Below are some additional moribund magicks that have been developed over the past few decades.

Entice Undead

(Necromancy)
Level: 3
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 mile radius/level
Saving Throw: See below

This spell allows the moribund to draw undead creatures to his location. When the final words of the spell are intoned, a 10' high and 3' wide pillar of swirling black vapors is created. This pillar is a source of weak negative material energy that draws undead. Any and all mindless undead creatures (skeletons, zombies and the like) within the area of effect move toward the pillar. The more powerful undead are allowed a saving throw to see if they resist the pull of the spell. While traveling toward the pillar, undead creatures attack only in self-defense or if the way is blocked. When the drawn undead finally arrive at the pillar, they spend a single round staring into its depths. Then they are free of the spell's effects. *Entice undead* does not give the casting mage any power over the creatures once they arrive.

The negative energy is weak and mostly harmless to living things. The area around the base of the pillar is blasted of vegetation, requiring years to recover. Animal life automatically flees the area within 1 mile of the pillar. Intelligent creatures must make a saving throw vs, spell when within sight of the pillar or be so unnerved by its presence that they suffer –1 on all rolls. Anyone foolish enough to actually touch the swirling black energy suffers 1d6 hp damage and loses of 1d6 Constitution points; lost Constitution points are regained at a rate of one per hour.

Though the mage need not concentrate on the pillar to maintain it, should he move farther away than 30 feet, the spell abruptly ends. The material component is a human thighbone thrust into the earth where the pillar is to appear. This spell can only be cast after sundown.

Pilfer the Essence

(Necromancy)
Level: 5
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: One object
Saving Throw: Special

A wily moribund developed this spell after barely surviving an encounter with a warrior wielding a *sword of life stealing*. The mage coveted the negative energy within the weapon and, after much dangerous research, developed this spell to tap any cache of stolen life force.

The moribund must be aware that an object contains negative essence; this spell in no way divines such knowledge. Items that age, create undead, drain levels, cause withering or instant death, or weaken are often powered by negative essence.

When the moribund drains the enchanted object, he gains a number of hit points equal to the item's XP Value divided by 1,000. Thus, a *staff of withering* drained by *pilfer the essence* would transfer 8 hp (8,000 XP Value/1,000) to the moribund, while an *arrow of slaying* would grant only 1 hp (250 XP/1,000, rounding fractions up). Certain cursed objects may also be targeted by this spell, and since experience is usually not gained for such items, consider the list below that includes some of the more commonly known objects:

Candle of powerlessness: 2 hp
Necklace of strangulation: 8 hp
Periapt of foul rotting: 8 hp
Ring of weakness: 4 hp
Robe of powerlessness: 2 hp
Rug of smothering: 6 hp

The hit points gained from the casting of the spell are permanent but cannot exceed the caster's hit point maximum.

The object is allowed a saving throw against the spell to determine if the essence held within is totally drained or merely a portion is siphoned by the spell. Wands save as 6th-level wizards, staves and rods as 8th-level wizards, and all other items as 12th-level wizards. Should this save be successful, charged items only lose 1d4 charges while all other enchanted objects are rendered inoperative for 1d4 rounds. An item that fails this roll loses its enchantment permanently. Artifacts are unaffected by this spell.

The material component of this spell is the fingerbone of a thief.

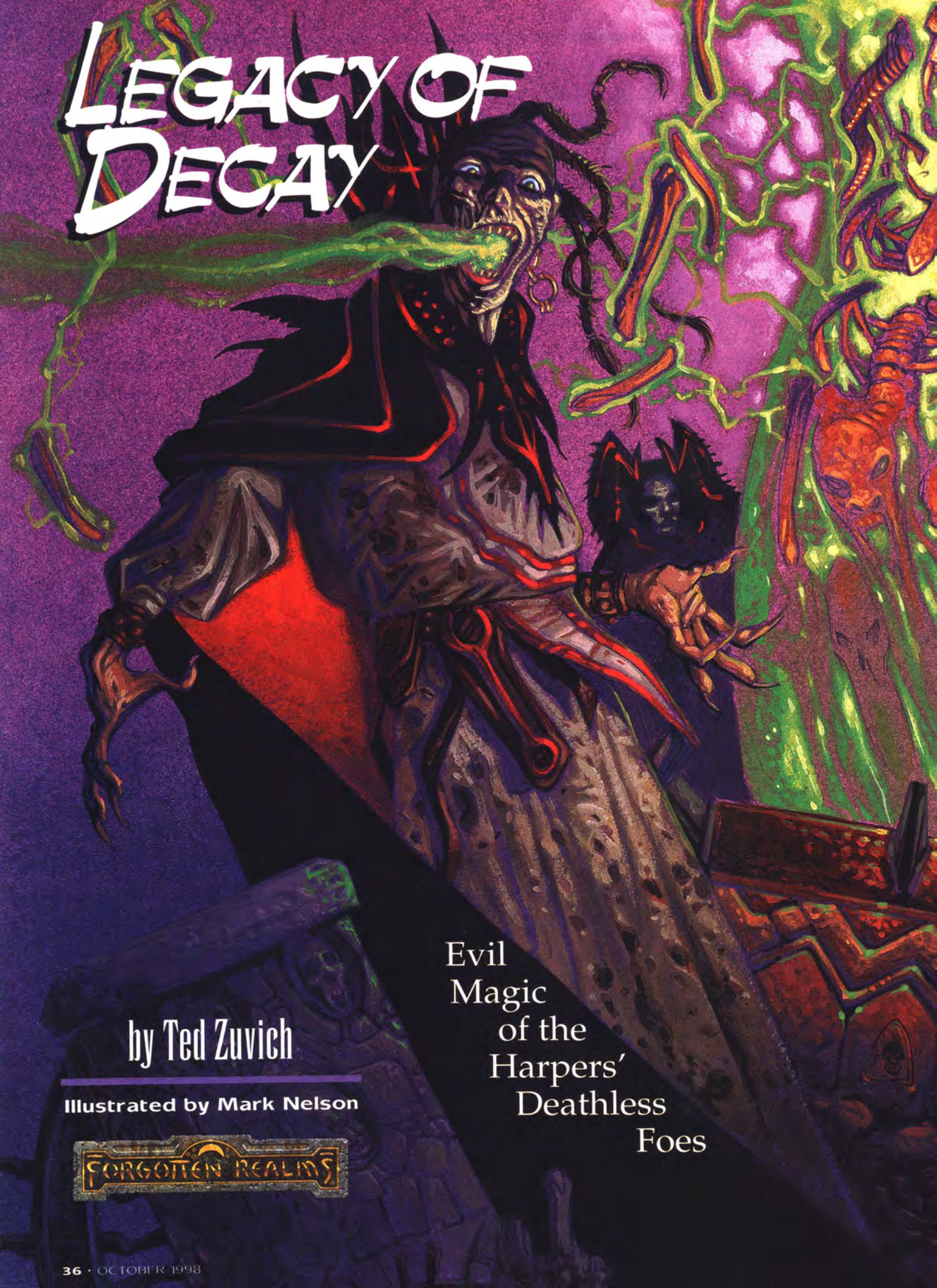
Risk of Corruption: A moribund's spirit may become corrupted by the negative energies he has absorbed. Every time the moribund acquires temporary hit points exceeding his normal allotment through draining undead, he has filled his body with so much death energy that his life is actually imperiled. The plane attempts to reclaim what was taken, and the moribund loses his resistance to undead attacks and becomes more susceptible to necromantic magic, losing his specialist wizard bonus and suffering –2 penalties to all saves vs. such attacks and spells.

If 24 hours have passed and the moribund is still corrupted because he has feasted on so much negative energy, another detrimental effect occurs: The mage suffers a permanent loss of 1 point of Constitution as the moribund's physical body suffers from the long exposure to negative energies.

Note that undead created by the moribund cannot be used as a source of negative energy, as the undead creature's death essence has been tainted by being channeled through the moribund's person; the mage cannot simply animate the dead himself to feed his needs.

Wealth Options: 3d6 × 10gp

Steve Berman scares us with the number of articles he submits.



Legacy of Decay

Evil Magic of the Harpers' Deathless Foes

by Ted Zuvich

Illustrated by Mark Nelson

FORGOTTEN REALMS

As the necromancers were discovered and brought to justice, their books, scribings, and tools were put to the torch, to erase that dark knowledge forever. Persistent rumors circulate in rarefied academic circles, however, that some copies of their writings and examples of their dark artifacts might still exist, held tight within secret vaults known only to the Harpers.

For the DM

The rumors about the existence of these necromantic writings and artifacts are true. Although the Harpers did their best to hunt down and stamp out foul necromantic practices, they are primarily a bardic organization. The general nature and training of the Harpers makes destroying knowledge anathema to them. The Harpers preserved a number of magical artifacts for study, although these are well guarded indeed. Even among the Harpers, their existence is known to only a few of the elite. Debate still rages between these few Harpers as to whether the items should be destroyed.

In addition, as spells unique to the necromancers were discovered, the Harpers made sure that one copy of each spell, no matter how wicked and foul, was sealed into secret vaults controlled by the Harpers. The ever-vigilant sages, bards, and other agents of the Harpers still guard those copies to this day. Who knows what crisis might require them to be brought to the light of day? In the meantime, their guardians rest uneasy and fret under the burden of dark dreams and nightmares about the consequences of loosing some of these spells upon the world.

PC necromancers might find many of these spells useful, although some of them (*revenant* and *final struggle*) are most likely to find use as plot devices by the DM.

Some few of these spells, such as *undead ward* and *suspended animation*, might be good and useful spells under most circumstances. Still others (*candle-life*, *drain vitality*, and *transplant*) could conceivably have good and pious application at times.

Most of these spells, however, are the foul creations of twisted intellects. They are evil through and through. Even learning these evil spells causes a good or neutral spellcaster to lose 1,000 experience points per spell level immediately. Using them causes an automatic change to evil alignment except under the most extenuating circumstances. DMs should adjudicate these situations as best fits the tone of the campaign world, perhaps declaring that any player character so corrupted immediately becomes a nonplayer character villain under the DM's control. The evil spells and magical items are indicated in the text with [E].

Magical Items

The Black Satchel [E]

Orne the Bloody was one of the most powerful necromancers ever brought to justice by the Harpers. The Harpers chased Orne for nearly two decades, over thousands of miles, through ten countries, and in three bodies before they finally brought him to ground. *The Black Satchel* was one of the items recovered.

This notorious yet nondescript satchel is a perversion of the medical doctor's satchel. It radiates faint evil. Through the use of the satchel, a necromancer can effectively cast any of the following spells, each once per day: *cure blindness or deafness, cure disease, cure serious wounds, neutralize poison, cure critical wounds, raise dead, heal, regenerate,* and *resurrection.* The necromancer must be of appropriate level to cast the spell in question. For example, since *resurrection* is a seventh-level spell, it takes a 14th-level necromancer to cast the spell using the satchel.

There is, of course, a price for using the satchel. For every two levels of the spell cast using *The Black Satchel* (rounded up), the necromancer must murder (not just kill) one intelligent humanoid. The necromancer must complete the murders at the rate of (at least) one per day. If the necromancer must murder four people, he or she has four days to do it. If the necromancer does not perform the required murders within the given time frame, he or she withers and dies (no save) at the end of the time.

Using this foul creation immediately causes a good or neutral spellcaster to become evil. The spellcaster also suffers an additional, one-time penalty of 5,000 XP and, depending on the campaign, might become an NPC villain controlled by the DM.

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 8,000

The Intellect Syringe [E]

Said by some to have originated on another plane (or Demiplane), this frightening device appears to be a nothing more than a large, sturdy medical syringe, at least to those familiar with such technology. It has an unusually sturdy needle, which is about six inches long. To use the syringe, the user drives the needle up through the base of the skull and into the victim's brain, then draws out the cerebrospinal fluids. This process kills the victim, painfully and slowly, over a period of about ten minutes. Note that the victim must be bound and helpless to complete this maneuver.

Next, the user drives the needle up through the base of the skull and into the recipient's brain and injects the fluid. The recipient immediately gains 1d6 points of Intelligence, up to a maximum of 18. The Intelligence increase lasts for one month, after which the points fade away at the rate of one point per week. Immediately after injecting the foreign brain fluids, the recipient must save vs. spells or lose one point of Wisdom. If the recipient's Wisdom is reduced to 3 or less, the recipient immediately becomes homicidally insane, with no saving throw allowed. A *heal* spell cures the insanity, as does a *wish*; *cure disease* and *remove curse* spells have no effect.

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 2,500

The Needle of Fate [E]

The *needle of fate* is a small, well-crafted tattoo needle with a seemingly inexhaustible ink supply, in a variety of colors. To use it, the user marks a tattoo of any size or design on a victim's skin. Late at night, when the victim is sleeping soundly, the tattoo "comes to life" and attempts to kill the victim in a manner appropriate to its appearance. A tattoo of a spider, for example, comes to life as a poisonous spider and bites the victim. A tattoo of a rope might attempt to strangle the victim, etc. In each case, the victim must save vs. death magic or die.

Once the victim is dead, the person who placed the tattoo has some small control of fate for a while. Things go his way. In game terms, the user receives an automatic success on one failed saving throw or ability check if he or she murders someone using the *needle of fate.* The check not only succeeds but does so with spectacular results. Note that no matter how many people the user murders, each time he or she calls on fate, the tally resets to zero.

The danger lies in the fact that the victim might not die. If the victim does not die, and the user attempts to "call on fate," a backlash occurs. The user automatically fails whatever he is attempting to do. In addition, if there can be fatal consequences to the action, there will be. As an example, someone using the *needle of fate* to cheat at cards is caught—by someone who kills cheaters.

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 4,000

New Wizard Spells

Decay

(Alteration, Necromancy)
Level: 2
Range: 10' per level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time 2
Area of Effect: 1 object up to a 1' cube per level
Saving Throw: None

This chaos-based spell causes an inanimate object to age 10–15 (9 + 1d6) years per caster level. Ink fades, wood loses integrity, steel rusts and falls apart, leather weakens, paper becomes brown and wrinkled, and food decays into a foul mass of black goop. Any mundane items like this must make a saving throw vs. acid at –1 per two caster levels or fall apart. If used against a structure such as a door or a ship, the spell causes ½ point of structural damage per caster level.

Decay spells have little or no effect on permanent magical items such as

swords, armor, crystal balls, etc. At the DM's option, this spell may affect temporary magical items such as scrolls and potions. Such items still receive a saving throw vs. acid to resist the effects of the spell.

This spell cannot be used against living creatures. The material component is a small amount of any item associated with corruption, age, or decay, such as a bit of dung, some rusty steel links, a few white hairs, or piece of age-browned paper. The material component is consumed in the casting of the spell.

Undead Ward

(Abjuration, Necromancy)
Level: 2
Range: 10'/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1d6 + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 target creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell wards the target creature against the Strength-draining effects of some undead, i.e. shadows, sword-wraiths, etc. If such an undead touches the subject, the subject receives a saving throw vs. spell at + 2 to avoid the Strength drain. This spell does not provide protection against level draining, which is the realm of the third-level priest spell *negative plane protection.*

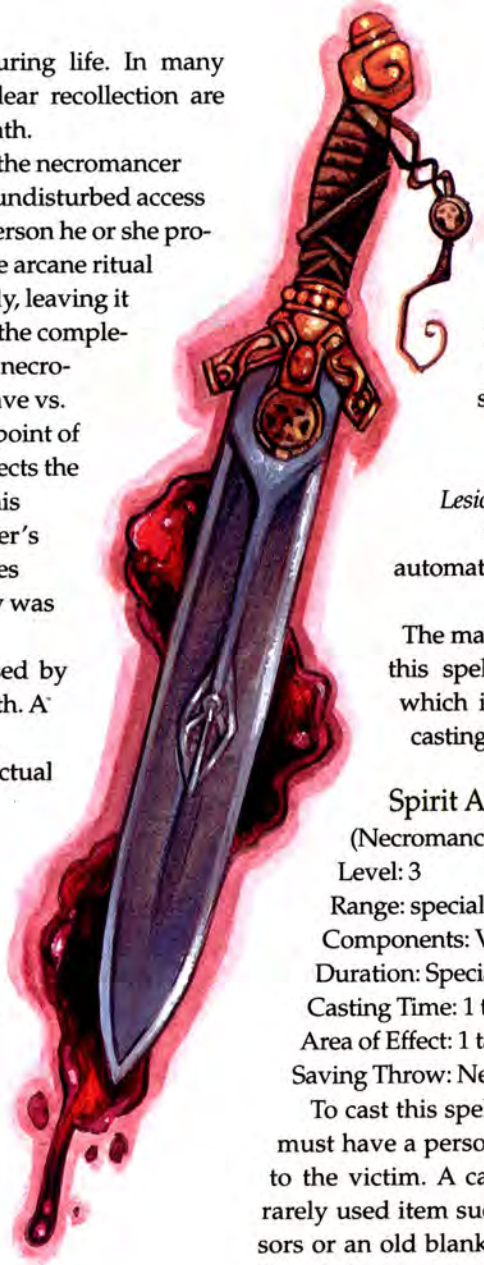
Contact the Dead

(Necromancy)
Level: 3
Range: caster
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn
Casting Time: 3 turns
Area of Effect: 1 dead creature
Saving Throw: None

Contact the dead is similar to the third-level priest spell *speak with dead,* except that it's not nearly as nice. The spellcaster may contact someone who has been dead for up to one hour per level of the caster. This spell inflicts great pain and trauma on the dead spirit. The spellcaster may ask the spirit one question for every three levels of experience. The dead spirit is obliged to answer the question(s) truthfully and completely or suffer agonizing pain. The spell is useful because often a dead spirit knows or remembers things it did not know or could not recall during life. In many cases, barriers to clear recollection are broken down by death.

To cast this spell, the necromancer must have full and undisturbed access to the body of the person he or she proposes to contact. The arcane ritual defiles the dead body, leaving it in a horrid state. At the completion of the spell, the necromancer must also save vs. spell at +3 or lose a point of Wisdom, which reflects the terrible effect that this spell has on the caster's sanity. This spell does not work if the body was buried in hallowed ground or was blessed by a good priest at death. A simple, nonmagical prayer suffices; an actual *bless* spell is not necessary.

Under most circumstances, use of this spell is an evil act and has alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters.



Lesion

(Necromancy)
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Target creature
Saving Throw: None

Necromancers cast this spell upon their focus (typically a staff, dagger, or other melee weapon), then attack the subject. All targets are treated as if they were armor class 10, although bonuses due to Dexterity or magic still count toward the target's AC. (*Chainmail +1,* for instance, counts as AC 9.) The necromancer may continue to try to hit the target creature until the spell expires or he or she successfully scores a hit.

When the focus object hits the target, a fountain of blood spurts from the location touched. Unless treated with major healing magic (*cure serious wounds* or better), the bleeding continues unabated, causing 1d6 + 2 hp damage per round until the victim dies or the spell expires. Tourniquets, bandages, pressure, and other mundane means of stopping or slowing blood flow are ineffective.

Lesion affects only living targets; undead and automata are not affected by this spell.

The material component of this spell is a dead leech, which is consumed in the casting.

Spirit Attack [E]

(Necromancy)
Level: 3
Range: special
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 1 target creature
Saving Throw: Negates

To cast this spell, the necromancer must have a personal item belonging to the victim. A casually owned and rarely used item such as a pair of scissors or an old blanket is not sufficient. The victim must treasure the item. Suitable items might include a favorite weapon, item of clothing, or a personal journal. To cast the spell, the necromancer completes a long and diabolical ritual involving the item. The ritual consumes material components worth at least 100 gp, in addition to the item.

When the victim next sleeps, he or she must save vs. spell or have a terrible nightmare lasting approximately 10 minutes. The victim cannot be awakened from this ordeal, which permanently drains one point of Wisdom. Victims who are reduced to a Wisdom of 3 or less become subject to a fear-based dementia which renders the victim useless for any sort of activity. The victim becomes almost catatonic with terror, requiring constant, infant-level care thereafter. A *heal* or a *wish* spell cures the dementia.

The nature of this dreadful attack is not readily apparent. It is not a curse. If the necromancer is careful and patient, repeated applications of the spell might never be noticed, as the victim slides slowly into insanity. A rapid descent into madness, over a period of days, is almost certain to attract outside notice; but a gradual slide into dementia, spread over several years, might delude observers into thinking that the dementia is a natural occurrence. The spell manifests on the Ethereal Plane as an evil-looking, turbulent black cloud of noxious vapors that hovers over the victim's head for as long as the nightmare portion of the attack persists (about 10 minutes).

A *protection from evil* spell or aura blocks this spell. A blessing (even a nonmagical blessing) by a good priest prior to sleeping provides a +1 bonus to the saving throw.

The use of this spell is an evil act and causes good and neutral spellcasters to move one alignment category toward evil and suffer the resulting penalties.

Candle-Life

(Necromancy)
Level: 4
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4 turns
Area of Effect: 1 target creature
Saving Throw: Negates

Necromancers use this spell to concentrate an ill or dying person's remaining vitality into a brief span of days: a number of days equal to the victim's original Constitution score, or one day per week the victim would otherwise live, whichever is shorter. If used on an unwilling victim, the target receives a saving throw to negate all effects.

After being affected by this spell, a terminally ill person gets out of bed and wanders about, eats normally, and feels great. The person enjoys normal physical statistics and health during his or her calculated time. At the end of the time, the victim falls ill and dies within one hour. The victim gains no saving throw against the rapid degeneration, and not even a *wish* stops the victim's death at the end of the hour. A *suspended animation* spell could conceivably "freeze" a victim of this spell in mid-degeneration, but this would only postpone the consequences, not negate them.

Use of this spell on an unwilling recipient is an evil act and could have alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters.

Orne the Bloody used this spell to murder dozens, if not hundreds, of folk throughout Faerûn. He specialized in casting his "rejuvenation" spell on vulnerable elderly people, collecting large fees and moving on before the dark nature of the spell revealed itself.

Drain Vitality

(Necromancy)
Level: 4
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 24 hours or 1 month
Casting Time: 4 hours
Area of Effect: Target creature
Saving Throw: Negates

The use of this spell drains one point of Constitution from the necromancer's victim and adds it to the necromancer's own Constitution. If the victim makes a saving throw vs. spell, the effect wears off in 24 hours, and the drained Constitution point returns to the victim. If the victim fails to save, the victim permanently loses the Constitution point, and the necromancer gains a point for a period of one month. The caster's augmented Constitution score cannot exceed the caster's original (young and healthy) Constitution score. As an example, Champlaigne the Deranged, original Constitution 9, current Constitution 7, can drain a maximum of two points from victims.

For best effect, the victim of the spell must be of the same race as the necromancer. Thus, a human necromancer should target human victims. Victims of a different race gain a +4 bonus to their saving throws.

Evil necromancers often use this spell to power the creation of magical items at the expense of others.

Drain vitality requires the use of 500 gp worth of material components (consumed), per level of the caster.

Under most circumstances, use of this spell is an evil act and could have alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters. It is possible that a good or neutral spellcaster might find a subject who is willing to undergo this procedure voluntarily to assist the spellcaster. In this case, there should be no alignment penalties.

Suspended Animation

(Necromancy)
Level: 4
Range: touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 month plus 1 month/ level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: None

Necromancers use this spell to put people into a deep, long-lasting sleep. During this sleep, the target does not age, thirst, hunger, or grow. Any poisons acting on the target are suspended until the spell expires. The spell is sometimes useful for containing troublesome criminals and saving poison victims until treatment can be arranged. Unlike the third-level spell *feign death*, the recipient of a *suspended animation* has no sense of smell, sight, or hearing and is unaware of the passage of time. Otherwise, the spell is identical to *feign death*.

Age

(Alteration, Necromancy)
Level: 5
Range: 10 yards + 10 yards/level,
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1 victim
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell permanently ages the victim by 1d6 + 1 years. Any statistic losses to Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity, caused by aging are effected immediately. If the victim's saving throw succeeds, the effect wears off in 2d8 + 8 hours. If the saving throw fails, the aging effect becomes permanent and the victim must also make a successful system shock roll or die.

To cast this spell, the necromancer must have several items. First, the necromancer requires several hairs (or other discarded clippings such as nails or skin) from the victim. Second, the necromancer must have hairs or clippings from a person who died of old age and was buried in unhallowed ground. Third, the necromancer must have at least one ounce of ichor from an evil

ghost. If the necromancer has any item taken from the body of a vampire (teeth, hair, skin, etc.), the necromancer can cast a powerful variant of this spell. With the addition of the vampiric components, every time the necromancer successfully ages a victim, the necromancer becomes one year younger. The *age* spell then becomes useful as a rejuvenation/youthfulness type spell.

Under most circumstances, use of this spell is an evil act and could have alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters.

Preserve Youth [E]

(Necromancy)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 month per caster level
Casting Time: 5 turns
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Negates

Necromancers use this spell to protect themselves (or others) from the effects of aging. The spell eliminates aging toxins from the target's body by flushing it with nurturing elements drawn from fresh blood and other supplies. The spell has two effects. First, the necromancer is protected from further aging for a period of one year plus one month per level of the caster. Second, the necromancer actually grows physically younger for the duration of the spell, typically returning to prime physical condition. This effect fades rapidly as the duration of the spell expires.

No two *preserve youth* spells may be in effect on the same subject at once.

The ritual requires the death of a young, healthy specimen of the same species as the caster and the use of 200 gp worth of evil and dark-natured exotic rejuvenation-related materials. All material components are consumed by the spell. Should the victim succeed in a save vs. spells, he or she cannot be the victim of a future *preserve youth* spell cast for the benefit of the same recipient.

Each time a necromancer uses this spell, he or she must save vs. spell. If the save fails, the necromancer must use an additional victim the next time he or she uses the spell. A necromancer who has failed this saving throw two times, for example, would require four young and healthy victims to make the spell work again.

The use of this spell is by definition an evil act and should certainly have severe alignment consequences for both good and neutral spellcasters.

Summon Ghost

(Conjuration/Summoning, Necromancy)
Level: 5
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level or special
Casting Time 5 turns
Area of Effect: 10' cube
Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the necromancer summons one ghost (see the *Monstrous Manual*® tome) for every five levels of experience the caster has obtained. The ghosts must be summoned within a specially inscribed rune circle or else they attack their summoner. Once summoned correctly, the ghosts are under the nominal control of the necromancer and attack the necromancer's enemies on command. (They can leave the rune circle to do so.) The ghosts remain until slain or turned, or until the spell duration expires.

The necromancer can cast *geas* on the ghosts to set them to one task. In this case, the ghosts remain on the material plane (and can leave the rune circle) until the task is complete.

Another version of this spell is rumored to imprison the summoned ghosts permanently within the rune circle where they were summoned.

Transplant

(Necromancy)
Level: 6
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 6 turns
Area of Effect: Target creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell transplants a fresh, unspoiled body part onto (or into) a willing recipient. A man with a missing leg, for example, could receive a new leg through the use of this spell. Other body parts can also be transplanted: eyes,

heart, liver, arms, stomach, and so forth. The necromancer cannot use this spell to give the recipient extra body parts: three arms on a human, for example, is one too many. If successful, the transplanted parts are fully functional and act as if they were part of the recipient's body. To determine success, the recipient must make a saving throw vs. death magic. If the save succeeds, the graft is successful.

If the save fails, the transplant fails and the body part withers away and dies. In addition, the recipient of the body part must make a system shock roll or die from the rejection trauma.

Several factors affect the success of this spell. First, the donor (the person supplying the body parts) must be a willing donor. If the donor is not willing, a –2 penalty applies to the recipient's saving throw. Second, the body parts must be fresh. For every hour spent between removal from the donor and attachment to the recipient, there is a –1 penalty to the saving throw.

This spell consumes at least 600 gp worth of material components.

Revenant

(Necromancy)
Level: 7
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 day
Area of Effect: Target creature
Saving Throw: None

To use this spell, the mage must have a helpless victim (hence no saving throw), willing or unwilling. The victim must be placed in a magic circle and securely bound with stout, rune-inscribed chains of black iron. These preparations cost at least 4,000 gp. During the casting of this spell, the mage cuts out the victim's heart and replaces it with a hard-baked lump of black clay. The mage holds the victim's real heart (still beating) in an enchanted box of at least 1,000 gp value and requiring the use of *enchant an item*.

At the completion of the spell, the victim becomes an undead revenant, bound in service to the spellcaster. The revenant looks alive and normal, although it radiates faint magic. The revenant gains several abilities:

- No longer needs sleep, rest, water, food, does not age, etc. The revenant can eat and drink if it wishes, and it can fake sleep.
- Enhanced senses, to the point that it is surprised only on a 1 on a d20 and can find secret doors on a 1–3 (1–4 if an elf). The revenant also gains 20' night vision. (Elven infravision is enhanced to 120' range.) The revenant also has a 20% chance to see or sense invisible objects.
- Gains 18(00) Strength.
- Regenerates damage at 2 hp/round, even if dismembered.
- Traditional undead immunity to *sleep*, *hold*, and *charm* spells (other than those cast by its master).
- Retains all abilities and knowledge it had while "alive" but can no longer gain levels (if classed).
- 5% magic resistance.

The spell persists for as long as the enchanted box containing the revenant's true heart lasts. Destroying the box/heart also destroys the revenant.

One difficulty with this spell is that, after creation, the creature still has free will. In most cases, victims of this spell hate the necromancer performing the ritual and would destroy the spellcaster given the opportunity. Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending who you are), the spell comes with several built methods of controlling the revenant. Any damage inflicted on the victim's real heart (squeezing it lightly, for example) causes the revenant great pain and lends any orders made by the holder of its heart the power of a *suggestion* spell. Also, any spells cast directly on the true heart by the owner of the enchanted box automatically affect the revenant as if the spells had been cast on the creature, but with no saving throw allowed. Finally, if the owner of the box is injured in any way, the revenant automatically suffers twice the amount of damage the owner sustains. This damage cannot be regenerated, unless the owner heals.

The *revenant* spell may be reversed, restoring the victim's real heart and mortality, if the enchanted box/heart is secured. Reversing the spell is a complex ritual that requires at least 5,000 gp worth of components. The victim must make a resurrection survival roll to

survive the process. If successful, the victim loses 1 point of Constitution but regains his or her mortality.

A *dispel magic* cast on the revenant must first overcome the *revenant* spell. In addition, the revenant receives a saving throw vs. spell. If the dispel succeeds, the *revenant* is slain instantly, and the caster of the *revenant* spell knows it.

Under most circumstances, the use of this spell is an evil act and has alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters.

Summon Night Hag [E]
(Conjuration/Summoning)
Level: 8
Necromancy
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 hour
Area of Effect: See below
Saving Throw: None

To use this spell, the necromancer must inscribe a magic circle on a black granite floor with an iron chisel that was tempered by plunging it into the stomach of a living humanoid being. The victim of this phase of the spell must die for the spell to continue. The necromancer must also know the true name of the night hag being called. If the necromancer fails to use the hag's true name in the summoning, the hag is free to leave the circle and attack the necromancer, if she wishes.

At the completion of the ritual, a night-hag appears in the circle. The mage must give the night hag a living, whole, complete, bound and trussed human, elf, or similar intelligent humanoid creature. When the hag accepts the payment, the mage then gives the hag a personal item belonging to the true victim of this spell. The hag uses this item to track down and haunt the victim, per the description of events outlined under the "night hag" entry in the *Monstrous Compendium* tome.

The caster can bargain for other services, such as spell information and item recovery, but sending the night hag after hapless victim is the most common use.

Under most circumstances, casting this spell is considered an evil act and should have alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters.

Final Struggle
(Evocation, Necromancy)
Level: 8
Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 8 hours
Area of Effect: See below
Saving Throw: Negates

Final struggle is a *contingency*-type spell; its effects are launched only when certain conditions are met. Casting the spell consumes material components worth a minimum of 1,600 gp. When the necromancer dies or is killed, his or her spirit lingers in the area where the death occurred. Any time after death, the newly detached spirit of the mage may have one (and only one) *magic jar* attack against a nearby sentient creature. If the *magic jar* succeeds, the necromancer now has a new body, and the victim's life force is expelled and lost. If the *magic jar* attack fails, the necromancer dies completely, and the spirit goes on to whatever eternal torture surely awaits it. For additional details, see the description of *magic jar*.

Under most circumstances, the use of this spell is an evil act and has alignment consequences for good and neutral spellcasters.

In between the L-dots, del-phi's, dM's, tensors, quaternions, and other arcane physics terms, Ted still has the time to knock off an occasional article. Ted dedicates this article to the Jacks, an unfortunate group of PCs who actually had most (if not all) of these spells used against them in a campaign long, long ago.

101 Hauntings

by Anne Brown

Illustrated by Brad McDevitt

When the frost is on the pumpkin and a chill is in the air, what's better than an evening of eerie ghost stories? Whether you're reading for fun or hoping to give your roleplaying group a case of the shivers, the scenarios that follow should do the trick.

You can apply these adventure starters to any roleplaying game and any level of characters. Since most of them are based on or inspired by "real" hauntings, they fit equally well into a RAVENLOFT® campaign or even—with a few changes such as swapping "boat" for "shuttlecraft" and "island" for "asteroid"—a STAR*DRIVE™ adventure. These tales might be genuine hauntings, hoaxes perpetrated by frightened loners, or innocent meddling that turned foul and attracted real spirits. Alternatively, they might spice up otherwise dull pub or campfire conversation. Whatever the choice, dress up your adventure with colorful witnesses, creepy stakeouts, and a fake fright or two.

Suspense is the key. If your players are used to scenarios with real ghosts, slip them a hoax or two to restore some of their skepticism. Conversely, if your campaign is devoid of the supernatural, you can still play fair by introducing a haunting but including enough clues for skeptical heroes to rationalize a scientific explanation. No matter whether your ghost is a genuine haunting, let your heroes believe the worst until the truth is discovered.

Haunted Waters & Lonely Shores

1. A sailor, guilty of a crime aboard ship, is abandoned by his shipmates on a remote island. Following his death, his spirit returns to haunt the ship, killing one sailor each night the ship is at sea.

2. A passenger on a sinking ship is cheated from his place in a life boat. He drowns in the wreck and later returns to haunt the passenger who took his seat in the life boat.

3. A ship passing a small island is alerted by a castaway's signal fire. The ship's crew rescues the victim and brings her aboard ship. The next morning, the woman cannot be found. When the ship returns to the island to investigate, the crew finds the bones of a woman and tattered clothing resembling what their passenger was wearing.

4. Near an isolated and uninhabited bay, a small boat encounters a much older and larger ship. The latter is brightly lit, and a party is in full swing; the crew of the small boat is invited aboard. The next morning, the ship is discovered to be derelict. It is all but rotted away, and the skeletons of its passengers and crew are found throughout the ship.

5. Inhabitants of a lighthouse are roused from their sleep at the same hour every night during foggy weather. Loud moaning chills the occupants, and objects fly about the rooms. The disturbance is caused by the spirit of a former lighthouse keeper who slept through a foggy night, failing to keep the torches lit and causing the wreck of a ship and the deaths of its passengers and crew.

6. A cave along a remote stretch of beach is a popular picnic spot for teenagers and lovers. One afternoon, when a thunderstorm whips up, a small group hurries into the cave for shelter. As they approach, a man in a black robe hurries away; the body of a woman in a white garment is discovered in the cave, surrounded by burning white candles. The group summons the authorities, but no trace of the man or woman is ever found. The cave is known to have been used by both pirates and witch covens in centuries past.

7. A woman dies while being towed behind a boat in a test to see whether she is a witch. Following her death, boat owners crossing the river at the same spot report a bedraggled, tearful woman trying to climb into their boats.

8. An isolated bay is rumored to harbor a ghost ship. Every spring, the ship is said to sail into the bay, drop anchor, and vanish. The rumor is perpetuated by local boys hoping to lure their girlfriends to the nearby cliffs.

Unquiet Tombs

9. When graverobbers break into an old crypt and steal the jewelry from the body of a dead woman, they rouse the woman's spirit. Thereafter, neighbors report the ghostly figure of a woman circling the tomb every night and shrieking horribly.

10. An unfortunate soul who was buried alive haunts his grave site. The victim's spirit grabs passersby and tries to bring attention to the grave to have it dug up and the mistake discovered. One witness, in his twenties, discovered that, the morning after his encounter, his hair had turned as gray as ash.

11. A warrior who died defending his family now reenacts the scene of his death if strangers enter his tomb. He attacks all who come near, wielding an invisible but deadly blade. Sword slashes are visible on the stonework inside the tomb.

12. An ancient cemetery, long ago filled to capacity and overgrown with weeds, is said to be haunted by glowing balls of light that dance through the cemetery at random intervals. Locals claim that the lights are the spirits of the children who are buried there, playing together in the afterlife.

13. A once-peaceful graveyard is suddenly plagued by inexplicable screams and vandalism. Headstones are tipped over, turf is ripped up, and shrubs are broken. The spirits themselves have become angry with the grave diggers; to save time and money, the diggers have buried paupers atop other caskets already in the ground.

14. A man believes that a local graveyard is the site of a vein of silver, gold, or other ore. He goes to elaborate lengths to make the graveyard appear haunted, hoping to convince locals to relocate the graveyard so he can buy the land and mine the ore.

15. Locals who pass a small cemetery on horseback report that on many occasions, a person has jumped onto the back of their horse and ridden that way for more than a mile. When the terrified riders looked around, they saw no one but felt icy hands gripping their shoulders.

Objects of Power

16. A woman dies in a fire, and the last thing she sees is her face in a mirror, warped by the flames. The woman's spirit haunts the home that was built on the site of the fire, causing mirrors to turn black or break and sometimes attacking attractive women who visit the home.

17. A vengeful young woman, stricken with mental illness, dies in an accident. Upon her death, her spirit is transferred to a doll. By commanding the child who owns the doll, she manages to orchestrate the deaths of her family members whom she saw as cruel and spiteful.

18. A thief hears a legend of buried treasure inside an ancient cottage. To drive the inhabitants away and keep out trespassers, he pretends to haunt the cottage, possibly inviting a real spirit to take vengeance on him.

19. A young woman inherits a ring after the death of her overbearing, manipulating mother. The ring becomes stuck after being placed on her finger, and all attempts to remove it fail. The woman experiences crippling pain in her hand if she approaches individuals her mother disliked or if she tries to engage in activities her mother forbade.

20. A deck of cards owned by a deceased gypsy diviner is said to have taken on a life of its own. The cards are said to lay themselves out to tell fortunes, send warnings, and scold those who have done wrong. Attempts to burn the cards, destroy them in water, and cut them in pieces have failed.

21. A spoiled little girl learns some sleight-of-hand tricks and uses them to convince her family that their home is haunted. She claims to control the ghost, and that if everyone does as she asks, she keeps the ghost in check and prevents it from harming the family.

22. A paladin dies in a battle clutching his weapon. Although the weapon was never enchanted, anyone who uses it senses that the weapon provides some kind of otherworldly assistance, for the wielder rarely misses.

23. A man or woman falsely accused of a crime was hanged from a gallows and left swinging an entire night. The rope that was used has taken on a mind of its own and has slithered like a snake into the homes of those involved in the hanging. The local sheriff tried to set the rope on fire, but it could not be burned. The rope was buried in the ground but has disappeared.

24. An elderly woman dies while asleep in a rocking chair. The owners of the chair claim that, when they sit in it, they sometimes feel as if they are sitting down on someone who is icy cold. At other times while sitting in the chair, cold arms wrap around the seated individual and squeeze firmly.

25. On a quiet farm, an elderly couple are murdered by a farmhand, and their money is stolen. After the couple is buried and the crime goes unsolved, the face of the farmhand slowly begins to appear on their tombstone, growing more distinct with each passing day.

26. A woman's collection of ceramic figurines is dispersed among relatives after her death. Within a week, disturbances occur in every household that received a figurine, and the statues themselves seem to wiggle and dance. The figures wish to be reunited and continue their activity until they are brought together.

Murder & Mayhem

27. A man or woman is en route to deliver a valuable package to a loved one, perhaps a destitute relative, or to a charity. The individual is robbed and murdered. Immediately, the victim's spirit follows the criminal, haunting and torturing him until he delivers the package (or the monetary equivalent) to the intended party.

28. Fearing a prowler, a man accidentally stabs his wife when he goes to investigate strange noises in the middle of the night. The wife's spirit returns to live with her husband, not understanding why she was killed. The husband might continue living with his wife as if nothing had happened.

29. In a fit of rage, a man kills his wife. Fearing the authorities, he seals her body inside a wall in their home. The man dies mysteriously a few months later. Families who try to live in the home report distant voices, moving objects, and chill breezes, the result of the dead woman's spirit hoping to be put to rest.

30. An elderly couple is killed by intruders in their home, and their bodies are buried in unmarked graves on the property. Various families and individuals try to live in the home, not realizing its history. The spirits of the dead couple scare off those they don't like, waiting for a suitable family whom they can lead to hidden wealth inside the home in exchange for a proper burial.

31. A family is killed inside their home by passing marauders. At each place where a body lay, a blood stain remains on the floor, impervious to repeated scrubbing. On the anniversary of the deaths, images of the bodies appear at the site of each blood stain, linger for about an hour, then vanish.

32. A man building a cabin in a woods is killed and dismembered with his own axe, with no motive apparent. Each night at sundown, the man's spirit attacks anyone within 100 yards of the cabin, swinging his own phantom axe. The only reliable witness to the activities is a hermit known as Gustav.

33. Angry with his fellow townsfolk, a man stages his own death, then dresses to appear as a ghost. He terrorizes the town, setting fires and peering in windows. The "ghost" claims that it can be put to rest if the townsfolk place a large sum of money at his grave.

34. A mental hospital engages in the barbaric practice of hosing down unruly patients with cold water. After several patients die from the procedure during the winter, the hospital staff find themselves chased by a real or spectral hose that sprays real or spectral ice water.

35. A small tribe of barbarians living near a pond is chased off its land by territorial settlers; many barbarians are murdered in the process. As the settlers begin to build a town, they find themselves the targets of random fires, attacks by invisible assailants, and property destruction.

Ill Luck & Unfinished Business

36. A man is killed in an accident during the construction of a bridge. He seems unaware of his death, for he appears at work every day until the bridge is finished. After completion, he still arrives for work; his ghostly form is sometimes seen clambering about the structure, and a hollow hammering echoes from the bridge. Locals claim that during bad weather, a man appears to warn travelers from crossing the bridge. In all such cases, moments later, a carriage or horse sped across the bridge. The stranger's warning saved them from certain death.

37. A man is hired to tear down a damaged structure (barn, house, bridge, or other), and he is accidentally killed. The demolition is completed, and a new building is eventually finished. The victim, however, returns every night to complete his job, and works at tearing down the new building.

38. An ancient battlefield is rumored to be haunted by the spirits of an entire squad, unit, or army. Its commander disobeyed orders and led his troops to the wrong site, resulting in all their deaths. The troops may be pressed into service in a real or mock battle, allowing them to fulfill their "mission" and finally rest.

39. A criminal is held in a local prison. When the town is suddenly flooded, the criminal is abandoned despite his screams for help and drowns in prison. His spirit attempts to kill local officials, set fires, and cause general mayhem.

40. A woman staying at a remote inn falls into the well and drowns. From then on, patrons report that the room in which the woman stayed is freezing cold at all times of the year. A stable boy later claims to have seen a woman climbing out of the well on a foggy night.

41. A drunken carriage driver causes his carriage to crash off a bridge and into a river. He survives but is soon haunted by one or more of the passengers who died in the crash.

42. A husband and wife are asleep when their home catches fire. They are separated when the husband rushes two of their children out the front door. The woman escapes out the back door with their baby, but her husband dies when he goes back into the house to find them. From then on, at the same hour every evening, his spirit thunders through the house, searching for his wife and baby.

43. A thief is killed when she falls while scaling a high wall. Every evening, at the hour of her death, phantom footsteps creep up the outside of the wall as the thief tries to complete her mission.

44. A man is thrown from his wagon and killed while rushing to help an injured friend. On the same road, wagon drivers report being yanked from their wagons and their rigs driven off with no one at the reins.

45. A member of the town watch falls asleep at his post and fails to warn his village of approaching bandits. Several townsfolk are killed, and the watchman dies when he is trampled by the bandits' horses. From then on, the spirit of the watchman races through town every night, screaming tardy warnings.

46. A husband and wife spread rumors that they are desperate for money, then stage their deaths in a fall from a bridge. They return to "haunt" the bridge, threatening passersby with death unless they pay the ghosts.

47. Two teenage girls are nearly killed in an accident. They hover between life and death as healers attempt to save them. Both girls suddenly seem to die, then one sits up. Unfortunately, the girls exchange bodies, and the spirit of the wrong girl suddenly inhabits the body of her friend.

48. The piper leading a funeral procession is killed when the horses pulling the caisson bolt and trample him. At every funeral procession that passes down the same road, the ghost of the piper appears, playing dirges.

49. A pregnant woman receives the news that her husband has been killed in war or an accident. The woman later dies in childbirth. The baby's eyes briefly fall upon her dead mother. Only a few minutes after the mother's death, the baby dies. Following the first anniversary of the baby's death, the interred infant grows restless. The first woman to pass the infant's grave after the anniversary is followed by the child's spirit, who has decided that this woman is her lost mother.

50. The bellringer at a large cathedral dies in a fall from the belfry. Thereafter, the bells of the cathedral ring at the hour of his death, though no one is in the belfry and the bells do not appear to move.

Ill-Mannered Spooks

51. A husband and wife visit a local pub every Friday evening for supper and to play cards with friends. Although the pair are known to love each other, they fight bitterly during card games and call each other names, to the amusement and embarrassment of onlookers. After they are killed one evening on their way home, their ghosts appear at the pub every Friday evening, following the same routine of dinner and card-playing that they had for many years, in full view of all guests.

52. A man kills himself when he cannot repay his gambling debts. Thereafter, when groups play cards in the pub he frequented, his disembodied voice shouts orders to the players, ridicules players who make mistakes, and on occasion, tries to grab cards from someone's hand.

53. An elderly woman has worked as a cook for a wealthy family nearly her entire life. After her death, she haunts the same kitchen, seasoning food, moving supplies around, and hiding items from the staff. A young maid reports having her hand slapped after adding too much salt to a recipe.

54. A young actress, distraught at not getting the part she desired, dies when she throws herself from the balcony. From then on, leading ladies are the object of her pranks; during rehearsals and performances, their hair is undone, they are pushed from behind, poked in the ribs, tripped, and so on.

55. A man chokes to death in the pub that he frequents. At least once a night thereafter, he wanders the pub and drains the mug of a patron. The mug rises into the air and tips, spilling its contents as if someone were drinking from the mug.

56. A local merchant has an extreme prejudice toward wizards and always overcharges them. When a group of mages discovers his trickery, they band together to torment the man with minor spells, making the man believe he is being haunted by a deceased wizard.

Romance & Obsession

57. An elderly man becomes obsessed with a young woman who is soon to be married. He kidnaps her, and she dies during her imprisonment. Her fiance is so distraught that he commits suicide; soon, he begins haunting the old man's home and business.

58. As a bride and groom prepare to say their vows in church, the groom is suddenly stabbed and killed by a jealous suitor. During weddings thereafter, brides report being kissed by icy lips, while grooms are held back from their brides as if by an invisible and impenetrable wall.

59. A woman is smothered by her married lover as they lie in his bed when he fears discovery. The woman's spirit returns to attack all women who eventually lie in the same bed.

60. While driving along a quiet road late at night, carriage drivers have reported offering a ride to a young woman walking along the road. She says her name is Mary, and she is dressed in a ball gown. She gives directions but otherwise does not talk. The drivers always notice her missing from the carriage shortly after passing a small graveyard.

61. A young woman's parents insist upon screening the dozens of suitors who wish to court their daughter. None are deemed good enough for the girl, even though she has fallen in love with a young man. The girl sickens and dies waiting for her parents' approval, then haunts her former home, searching for her lost love.

62. A less than honorable young man is intent upon marrying a young woman. When she refuses, the man murders her mother, then stages the mother's reappearance as a ghost. The ghostly mother's terrifying and violent message to her daughter is to marry the young suitor.

63. On the way to her wedding, a young woman is killed when her carriage overturns. Every Sunday morning from then on, her ghostly image drifts through the doorway of the church, walks down the aisle, then vanishes.

Help From Beyond the Grave

64. A family living on a farm is killed by a tornado. At first, visitors and friends do not realize the family is dead; all seems normal. Crops continue to be tended and the animals are healthy although rather skittish. Eventually, friends discover that the ghost family continues to care for its farm and crops.

65. A child of twelve is discovered to have extraordinary healing powers. The child, who rarely speaks and often seems to be in a trance, dies shortly after turning eighteen. A white rose bush sprouts at the grave site, although none was planted, and visitors claim to be healed by merely visiting the grave and touching the headstone.

66. A man dies while trying to save his home from fire. The house is destroyed, but neighbors pitch in to build a new home for the surviving family. Thereafter, once every night, a bucket of water is thrown upon one side of the house, although no one is ever seen at the spot and no footprints are left behind. The family believes their father is still trying to save them.

67. A bookish young man is often tormented by town bullies. To discourage them, the young man places warding symbols on his windows and doors and acquires magical paraphernalia. He claims to be able to summon spirits, thus scaring off his tormentors. His false claims may eventually invite real ghostly trouble.

68. In a remote forest glade, a hermit inhabits a homemade cabin. After his death of natural causes, locals report that the cabin changes location and that unearthly moans drift from it. A local sage claims that the hermit is trying to protect his woods.

69. When an elderly man's wife dies, he begins receiving packages of food on his doorstep. Seeing no reason to discard them, he eats the food that is left for him. Years later, a ghostly figure is seen leaving the packages; not only is the messenger ghostly, but the food is as well.

70. A man borrows a book from a friend and forgets to return it. Years later, the friend dies and returns to haunt the borrower, begging for the book's return, but the man cannot find it. After the man's death, the ghost continues to haunt his heirs, who are bewildered and uncertain what to do.

71. In a hospital operated by a small priesthood, residents of a certain room have reported the appearance of a pleasant, smiling woman, although no one fitting her description ever worked there. All patients recovered despite the priests' beliefs that they would die from their injuries.

72. A teenage boy dies in his sleep from unknown causes. Children who later live in the house report a "friend" fitting his description; he is even said to scare off bullies who teased or threatened the children.

73. Workers in a mine report that they are sometimes chased out of the mine by gruesome gurgling noises and a foul smell. They believe it is the ghost of a man who died of asphyxia years earlier, chasing them away when the air is bad.

Cruelty & Revenge

74. A misguided priest determines that he has seen signs of the end of the world. He whips his congregation into a terrified frenzy and leads them to a cave, deserted barn, or other remote site. When the end of the world doesn't come, the priest refuses to let his people leave, and all die. Their restless spirits wander the area, taking vengeance on any persons displaying the holy symbol of their priest.

75. A wealthy man marries a young woman by arrangement with her family. He treats her badly, and when the woman finally convinces her family of her predicament, the family rescues her and takes her home. The husband is outraged and appears at his wife's home, shouting threats. Just as he is about to set the home on fire, he is killed by his wife's brother. The husband later haunts his own home and that of his wife's family, slapping the women and trying to strangle the men.

76. The church of an evil cult is attacked during a ceremony with all members in attendance. The church is burned and all members are killed. Immediately, in a 20-mile radius around the church, crops wither, trees fail to bear fruit, cows cease giving milk, and animals sicken.

77. A local man is known as a terror; he is always angry, rude, and bossy. He kicks animals and snarls at children. Following his death, no one attends his funeral. Thereafter, the town is plagued by images of spectral fires, packs of animals running through the streets at night, and various phantoms and apparitions. No one is harmed, and no property is damaged, but residents are terrified.

78. A wealthy man's home is deemed uninhabitable due to the many spirits rumored to haunt the place. The original owner, now deceased, was discovered to have illegally kept slaves in a secret attic. During an especially hot summer, a number of slaves died in the attic, and their angry spirits now haunt the home, attacking anyone they choose.

79. A dead necromancer believes that if he kills enough victims, he can be restored to life. His spirit viciously attacks anyone who approaches his home or grave.

80. An evil wizard is killed trying to sneak into a home and kidnap a child. Beginning at the place where the wizard died, the walls and floor of the home begin to turn black and cannot be cleaned by any method.

81. A greedy, unscrupulous man decides to get rich. He stages the hauntings of wealthy homes, then offers his services as a ghost hunter, charging huge fees.

82. A child shows a decidedly evil streak; he is discovered to be responsible for the deaths of several siblings or playmates. The child is accidentally killed during a cruel punishment. The child's spirit returns to haunt his former home or village, breaking toys, throwing tantrums, and assaulting other children.

83. A family falls victim to bad luck, illness, and mental disease. Four or five family members die in a single year; the rest move out to avoid bad memories. Thereafter, the house seems to take on a life of its own; its rooms physically expand and contract, doors stick shut, windows slam, fires are extinguished in the fireplaces, and hideous images appear on the walls, only to be gone the next morning.

84. A miserly business man is accidentally killed in a fall while being threatened by business associates he cheated. Those who were present later report that inside their own homes, coins of ancient mintage sometimes fall out of thin air and land on the floor.

85. A large mansion once employed a strict, unyielding governess named Hepzibah who treated children like criminals. After the woman's dismissal and sudden death, the children in the mansion are terrorized. They find themselves locked in their rooms, their food stolen, their toys hidden, and unseen hands spanking them harshly.

86. A widow who drowned her two children and was later hanged by local authorities is said to wander her village, wailing for her son and daughter. On moonless nights, children sometimes wake up screaming, claiming that icy hands grabbed them in their sleep.

87. River pirates, caught and jailed thanks to a homeowner with a view of the river, vowed revenge against the man's family. A dozen years later, a pirate returned, broke into the house, and was killed by the occupant. The pirate's lighted candle is still said to drift through the home late at night, and wet footprints are sometimes discovered.

Inexplicable Events

88. A self-proclaimed healer is a con artist who cheats "patients" out of their money. When a woman dies as the result of phony treatments, the healer is convicted of the crime; punishment is amputation of the healer's hand. In an upstairs room of a local inn, where the healer practiced, guests have reported a disembodied hand creeping across the floor and attacking them at night.

89. An unscrupulous funeral director is secretly stealing clothes and jewelry from bodies with which he is entrusted. A woman named Brynna dies and is meant to be buried wearing a new pair of shoes she had saved her money to buy. The funeral director keeps the shoes, planning to sell them. Brynna's spirit haunts the man, walking barefoot through his home and hunting for her lost shoes.

90. An elderly woman has been a tightwad her entire life. After her death, she is found to have sacks full of gold, and the money is left to her children. The funeral director makes a minor mistake in calculating his expenses, overcharging the woman's heirs by a few silver pieces. The woman haunts him until he figures out his mistake and refunds her children.

91. An elderly diviner dies while communicating with a spirit from beyond the grave. From that moment on, the table at which she sat makes a rapping noise as if trying to communicate. The spirit wishes to be dismissed and allowed to rest in peace.

92. A phantom house is rumored to lie along a deserted stretch of road. Lost travelers have reported finding the house in a storm, with fires burning in the stoves and fresh water and bread waiting for them. Wicked folk (of those who have survived) report being locked in the house and tortured by shrieking voices and menacing shadows.

93. Two women, sitting up late one night on the front porch, witness a horse and rider pass. The rider wears a black cloak and is not recognized, and his horse makes no sound as they pass. The next day, the women learn that a neighbor has died on a farm in the direction of the strange rider's journey. The women witness the rider several more times, each time with a death reported the next day.

94. A man is burned at the stake in a town square for committing murder. Every evening following his death, a different witness to his execution appears to burst into flames. The victims are not harmed, but two die from the fright of the incident.

95. A middle-aged couple stages the haunting of their farm; late at night, they go out into the wheat fields and trample a message or design. The couple gets rich charging admission to see the mysterious crop writings.

96. A woman falls ill to delirium and throws herself out a window. After being carried into her home, she wakes up, apparently cured completely. But from then on, the woman has little of her own personality and instead speaks in the voices of persons long dead.

97. After being killed by lightning, the spirit of a young man returns to haunt the farm where he lived. The lightning has strongly magnetized the ghost; as he passes through the farmyard, pitchforks, hoes, nails, and other tools are drawn to him with great force, sometimes piercing his apparition. He never seems to notice the effect, but it makes a horrifying sight.

98. A man falls from a high bridge during its construction. Because the gorge is so deep, his body cannot be retrieved. After the bridge is completed, the place from which the man fell seems to weep tears of blood.

99. While driving home in a carriage in the rain, a woman loses control of her carriage and is plunged into a creek. The woman's body is found but her baby is never recovered. Visitors to the area have reported hearing a woman shrieking for her lost baby or humming a lullaby.

100. A woman is witnessed to be struck by lightning and is presumed dead, although her body is never found. A glowing, burning orb later pays visits to her family and friends, bathing them in a warm glow but harmfully scorching those the woman disliked.

101. A child walking to the well on his family's farm suddenly screams and disappears. His footprints in the snow end abruptly with no other marks. His screams echo downward as if from high in the sky. Hours later, the boy falls to earth, unharmed but terrified, claiming to have been carried off by ghosts.

The following entries were adapted from true stories found in *Haunted Heartland* by Michael Norman and Beth Scott: 6, 15, 24, 25, 30, 47, 60, 65, 71, 78, 87, 91, 93, 98, 101.

Anne Brown used to smuggle ghost stories and Nancy Drew books into bed with a flashlight. She highly recommends reading the Haunted Wisconsin, Haunted Heartland, *and* Haunted America *books by Michael Norman and Beth Scott, as well as the out-of-print* Carnacki the Ghost Finder *by William Hope Hodgson.*

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Home, Sweet

MARVEL SUPER HEROES ADVENTURE GAME

The Avengers' Mansion, Castle Doom, and Four Freedoms Plaza. All of these places are landmarks of the Marvel Universe™. More importantly, they are the headquarters of heroes like the Avengers and the Fantastic Four or villains like Doctor Doom. Bases, installations, and headquarters are a staple of the comics. This article talks about how to add bases to the Marvel Super Heroes™ Adventure Game, both heroic headquarters and villainous secret hide-outs.

by Stephen Kenson

Location, Location, Location

The first thing to consider in building a base is: where is it located? A base might be in a city, like the Avengers' Mansion, or it might be located on the outskirts, a safe distance from the city, such as when the Avengers relocated to Hydrobase off the coast of Manhattan. The base could be some distance from major cities, like Dr. Doom's castle in the Adirondack Mountains. Such a location provides more privacy but makes the base less accessible.

Of course, the base could be even more distant, deep underground, underwater, or hidden away in a distant place like Antarctica or Tibet. It might not even be on Earth, located in orbit, on another planet, or even in a distant galaxy, like the Dyson sphere that rock singer and mutant teleporter Lila Cheney used as a base for intergalactic piracy.

Generally speaking, hero bases tend to be closer to the people the heroes work to protect, and they are accessible to the public in some way. Some heroes (like the X-Men) prefer to keep a low profile and don't publicize the location of their base, but they remain close to places where they're likely to be needed. (Salem Center isn't very far away from New York City.) Villains' bases are usually hidden or located in distant places where they can't easily be found or attacked.

Structure

Once the location of the base is chosen, ask: what is its structure? Is it some fairly ordinary structure like a house, mansion, or office building? Is it something more elaborate like a castle or underground complex, or even an orbiting satellite, moonbase, or Dyson sphere? The base's Intensity can be used as the material strength of its walls and major components.

The Narrator should consider the abilities and resources of the owners of the base. Could they create or acquire such a base? For example, the Avengers are funded by the Maria Stark Foundation, which provides for their mansion headquarters. If the Avengers wanted to set up shop on the Moon, they might have some difficulties, unless they found an existing structure they could modify (like the ruins of the Blue Area). They would also need some means to return to Earth quickly in case of emergency; even their quinjets wouldn't be nearly fast enough. On the other hand, an orbiting base formerly used by A.I.M. was perfect for Baron Zemo's plan to take over the Earth: isolated and hidden from Earth's heroes while Zemo's bio-modem did its work, taking over the minds of the world's military. The same is true of Magneto's Asteroid M, isolated from the dangers facing mutants on Earth.

The designer of the base (the player or Narrator) might wish to draw a map of the base to get a better feel for the structure and layout, as well as what other features might go into the base.

Features

A base is assumed to come with all of the normal amenities of a decent house or office: living room, dining room, office space, bedrooms, furniture, and so forth. It has utilities, heat, light, and a reasonable amount of space. Everything else is considered a feature and must be purchased separately. The different features are listed below.

Backup Power: A backup power system, able to take over if the main system is damaged in any way.

Concealed: The base is hidden from casual sight by some kind of camouflage, or its location is not generally known. Finding the base is a *Challenging Intellect* action. A concealed base usually has its own power plant to prevent people from locating the base by tracking its use of power and other utilities.

Headquarters

Isolated: The base is isolated from the rest of the world in some way, making it more difficult to reach. It may be deep underground, underwater, in a distant place (like Antarctica), in outer space, on the Moon, or even in another dimension. An isolated base must have its own power plant and must be Sealed if it exists in a hostile environment.

Communications: The base can communicate via radio and TV waves or one other means of the owner's choice. Each additional means of communication (like a hyperspace relay) is an additional feature.

Computer: A computer capable of processing information from a library and running the base's systems. As an additional feature, the computer can be artificially intelligent, with an Intellect equal to the Intensity.

Danger Room: A room capable of creating various holographic threats and traps for training and testing purposes.

Deathtrap: The difference between a deathtrap and a defense system is generally that the deathtrap pulls no punches: it tries to kill you. Villain bases might have many different deathtraps as part of the defense system, or reserved for captured heroes.

Defense System: A defense system provides the base with weapons it can use to protect itself from intruders.

Dock: A facility for storing and maintaining water-vehicles like boats or submarines.

Firefighting: Automated systems for snuffing fires inside the base.

Garage: A facility for storing and maintaining various ground-vehicles.

Gym: A fully equipped gymnasium with weights, gymnastics equipment, sporting gear, track, and so forth. It includes weights or weight-simulators designed to test the Strength of any user of the base.

Hangar: A facility for storing and maintaining air-vehicles of all kinds.

Infirmary: A medical facility for treating injuries, illness and other maladies.

Lab: A facility for performing scientific tests and research.

Library: A storehouse of information. It could consist of actual books and paper records or computer files (or both).

Mobile: The base can move under its own power, like a vehicle.

Power Plant: The base can generate its own power, rather than drawing on outside power. The power plant might supply all of the base's needs, or it might be kept in reserve, in case outside power is cut off.

Prison: A facility for holding people captive. It includes power-dampers or other measures to hold super-powered prisoners.

Sealed: The base is independent of the outside environment and has its own air, food, and water resources.

Security System: The base has alarms and sensors designed to detect intruders. Overcoming the security system is an *Amazing Intellect* action.

Sensors: The base can visually detect things inside and outside (using closed-circuit cameras or something similar). Each additional sense is another feature.

Staff: The base has a staff of personnel to take care of it and the needs of its residents. This may be a single very efficient butler or housekeeper, or a full staff of specialized personnel.

Vast: The base is much larger than a mansion, castle or office building. It might be a tesseract, larger on the inside than it appears outside, or it might simply be a huge installation, perhaps even an entire world or dimension.

Powers

Bases may also have powers of their own, above and beyond the base's features. A base generally has the same Intensity for all powers. Base powers are generally controlled by the base's computer or security system, but they can be under the direct control of the base's owners or might be an inherent property of the base itself. The Narrator has final say about any powers given to the base.

Paying the Cost

When players design a base, the cost is calculated just as the cost of equipment: the Intensity of the base, plus the total number of features and powers the base has. Heroes can use their response bonus to build a base, with each hero contributing some of the initial cost. The Narrator may allow a base to be built in pieces with the heroes donating response bonus for the basic features of their new headquarters, then adding new features and increasing Intensity as times goes on. Adding to or repairing an existing base is a good use of response bonus; the heroes donating their response bonus should help work on the repairs or upgrades in some way, even if it's only moving and lifting the heavy stuff.

Of course, the Narrator can ignore or modify this cost as desired. A Narrator might wish to provide a base to the Heroes free of cost at the start of a series, and many established heroes and teams already have bases of their own. Villains and other characters, of course, don't have to worry about the cost of a base. If the Narrator wants them to have it, they do, with whatever features are needed.

The monetary cost of a base is entirely up to the Narrator. If the builder doesn't have the money to afford a base, he or she might acquire the base by some other means, such as assistance from the government or a wealthy patron. Of course, villains can always try to steal the funds they need to construct a new base.

Base Hooks

Many different adventures can be built around a base, either a hero's or a villain's. Here are a few possibilities:

- The heroes' base is taken over by an outside force, turning it into a giant deathtrap to be used against them. Security and defense systems are turned against the heroes, who must find a way to regain control of the base.

- The base is stolen by another party, either seized and taken over or literally removed from its former location and transported somewhere else (like another planet or dimension).

- The base contains something desired by another character, who breaks into the base to steal the item in question.

- The base is assaulted by enemies of the inhabitants; this might be heroes trying to capture a villain or villains making a strike against the heroes.

- The base contains secrets unknown to the current owners or inhabitants, as when X-Factor took possession of Apocalypse's Ship, unaware that it was a Celestial construct.

- The base contains a portal or means of entry for invaders from another planet or dimension, such as the Negative Zone portal in Four Freedoms plaza, or the dimensional portals in Dr. Strange's mansion.

- The patron who helped provide the base has some strings attached. For example, a government-provided base might require the heroes using it to have a government liaison and work as government operatives.

Base Roster

Provided here are some examples of bases in the Marvel Universe and the features according to this system.

Asteroid M

Intensity 18. Backup Power, Communications, Computer, Concealed, Hangar, Infirmary, Isolated, Lab, Library, Power Plant, Sealed, Security System, Sensors

Asteroid M is an orbiting base used by Magneto. It has been destroyed and reconstructed by the Master of Magnetism many times over the years. The base is built in and on a hollowed-out asteroid in orbit above the Earth, concealed by various sensor-baffling systems. For a time, Asteroid M was renamed "Avalon" and used as a base by Magneto's Acolytes, brought there by Exodus' teleportation power.

Avenger's Mansion

Intensity 14. Backup Power, Communications, Computer, Defense System, Firefighting, Garage, Gym, Hangar, Infirmary, Lab, Library, Prison, Security System, Staff

One of the most famous headquarters in the Marvel Universe is the Avengers' Mansion, located on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. The mansion originally belonged to the Stark family and was donated to the Avengers by Tony Stark (alias Iron Man). It contains the Avengers' sophisticated computer and communications systems, as well as housing the team's quinjets and the active Avengers who choose to live there. The mansion is ably cared for by Jarvis, the Avengers' faithful butler.

Dr. Doom's American Castle

Intensity 15. Backup Power, Communications, Computer, Deathtrap, Defense System, Hangar, Isolated, Lab, Power Plant, Prison, Security System

Built along the lines of Castle Doom in Latveria, Doom's castle is hidden away in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. Doom used it in his first attack on the Fantastic Four and in many subsequent plots. In Dr. Doom's absence, the castle was taken over by the criminal geneticist Arnim Zola, who was defeated by the Thunderbolts.

Dr. Strange's Mansion

Intensity 16. Concealed, Library, Staff, Vast. Located on Bleeker Street in Greenwich Village, Doctor Strange's mansion is an unassuming three-story house built over an ancient power-site. The interior of the mansion is much larger than the outside dimensions would suggest, and it features strangely shifting rooms that seem to appear and disappear at random. The mansion houses the Sorcerer Supreme's collection of mystical artifacts and once served as the ad-hoc headquarters of the Defenders.

Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters (the X-Mansion)

Intensity 15. Backup Power, Communications, Computer, Concealed, Danger Room, Defense System, Firefighting, Garage, Gym, Hangar, Infirmary, Lab, Library, Prison, Power Plant, Security System

Located on a large private estate near the town of Salem Center in New York State, the mansion operates under the guise of a private school run by Professor Charles Xavier. The mansion conceals the headquarters of the infamous X-Men, with several secret underground levels holding the team's facilities, including the famous Danger Room and a hangar for their super-sonic jet, the Blackbird. The X-Mansion still serves as a school as well, training the young mutants of Generation X.

The Vault

Intensity 12. Backup Power, Communications, Computer, Defense System, Hangar, Isolated, Power Plant, Prison, Security System, Sensors, Staff, Vast

The United States Special Penitentiary (known as "the Vault") is secretly located in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. The prison is specially built to contain super-powered criminals and was once able to hold the members of the East and West Coast Avengers. Prison break-outs are common, and heroes might be called in to help contain them. Heroes accused or convicted of a crime may face time in the Vault, which is not as easy to escape as the number of breakouts suggests.

Steve Kenson is the author of the upcoming AVENGERS: Masters of Evil *adventure book for the* MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game. *He only wishes he could hang out around cool places like Avengers Mansion and TSR HQ.*

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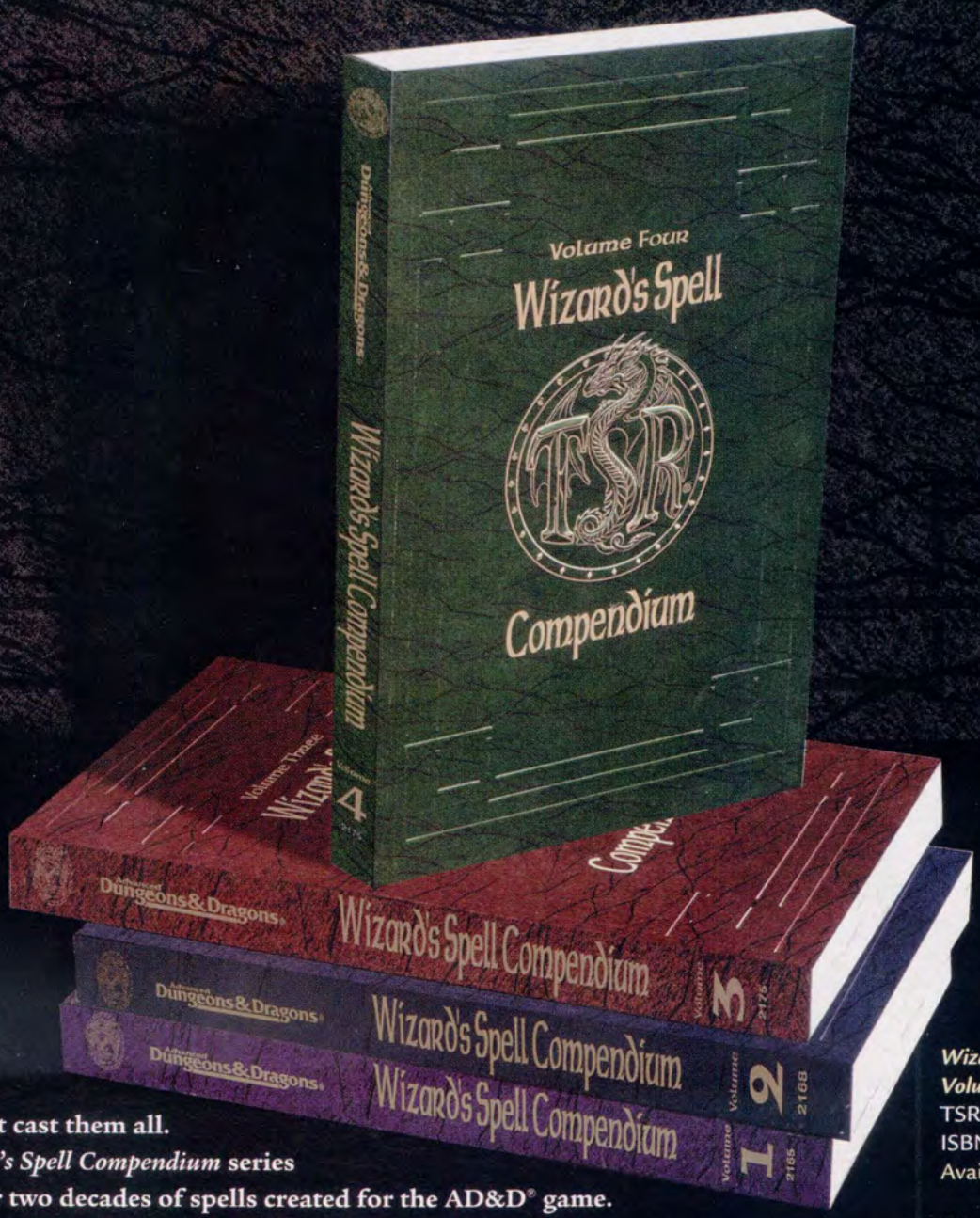

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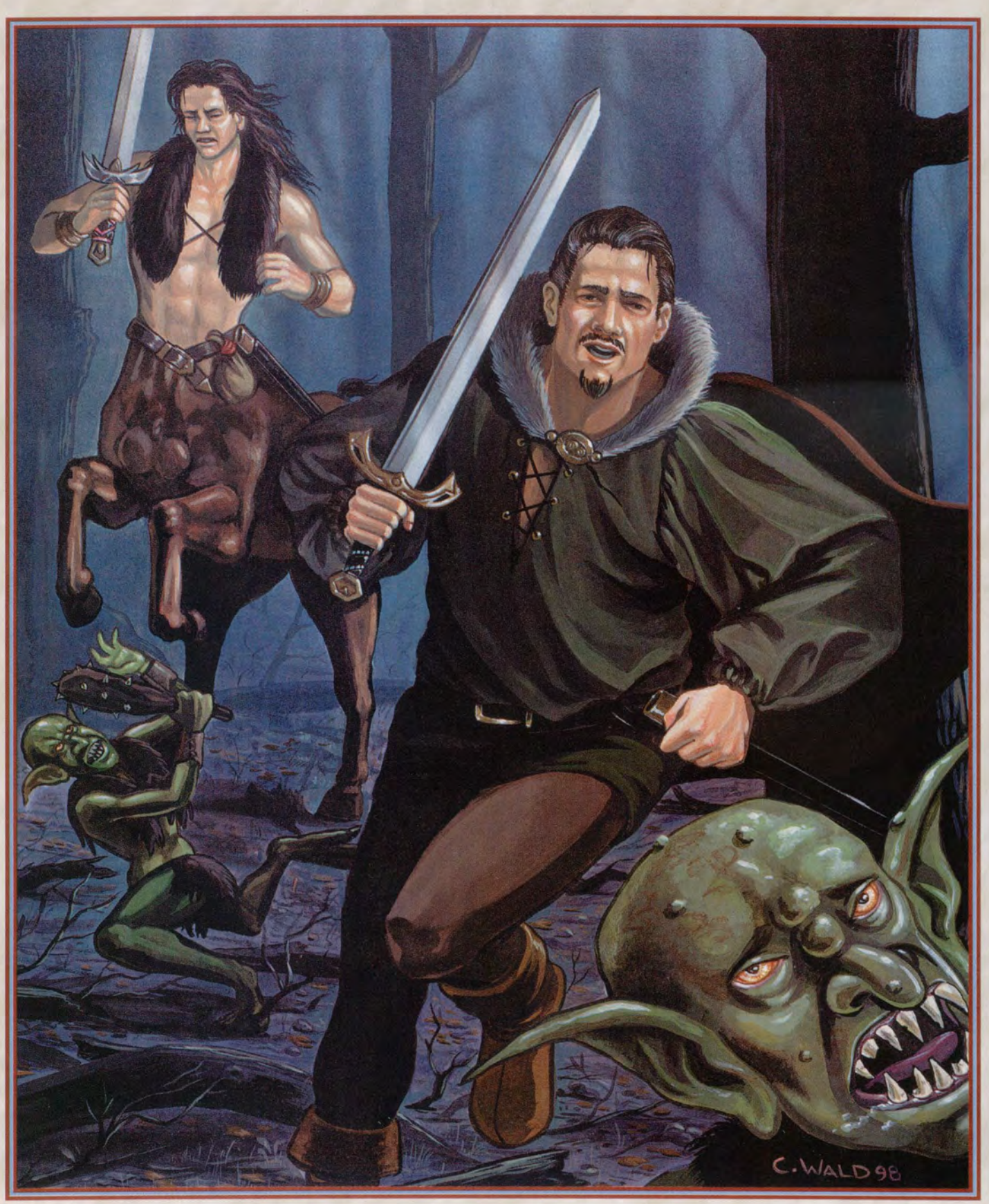
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Mather's Blood

by R.A. Salvatore

illustrated by Christina Wald

"Oh, but you're a quick one!" Mather Wyndon cried out, leaping a fallen log and cutting a fast turn about a sharp bend in the trail. He spotted the creature he was pursuing, an ugly and smelly goblin, far ahead, scrambling up a steep hill and over a wall of piled rocks.

The large man lowered his head and started straight on, but he stopped fast at the sound of a cry to his right. He cut behind a tree, grabbing its solid trunk to help break his momentum, and pivoted about, his fine elvish blade glowing with an eager white light.

Out of the brush came the second goblin, running wild, running scared, holding its crude spear—no more than a sharpened stick, really—out wide in one hand, in no position to throw or to stab.

The creature wasn't up for any fight, anyway, Mather understood as soon as he saw its features, twisted into an expression of the sheerest fright. That was the secret of fighting goblins, the seasoned ranger knew. Catch them by surprise, and the cowardly beasts would scatter, all semblance of defense thrown aside. Mather smiled as a second creature burst out behind the goblin, a huge beast with the lower body of a horse supporting the upper body of a man: a centaur, five hundred pounds of muscle, and this one, Bradwarden by name, was merely a boy, Mather knew.

A boy, but an impressive sight no less!

Hardly slowing, howling with glee, the young centaur ran up the goblin's back, trampled the ugly thing down into the dirt, then, as he came up above its head, he lifted his hind legs and stomped down hard, splattering the goblin's skull.

Mather didn't see it; having all faith in his half-equine companion, the elven-trained ranger was already in pursuit of the first goblin, running hard up the ascent, then leaping atop the stone wall, and then leaping far from it with graceful fluid movements. Mather was closer to fifty years of age than to forty, but he moved with the agility of a far younger man. Though he had spent the majority of his life in the harsh climate of the Timberlands, serving as silent protector for the folk of the two small towns in the region, Dundalis and Weedy Meadow, he felt few aches in his old bones and muscles.

From the top of the ridge, Mather saw spread before him a familiar vale of man-height spruce trees, triangular green dots among a field of white ankle-deep caribou moss. And there was the running goblin—and indeed it was a quick one!—scrambling along, cutting sharp corners about the trees, stumbling often, and half the time turning right around in a circle as it tried to keep its bearings in this vale where all the trees looked the same.

Down went Mather in a rush. The goblin spotted him and squeaked pitifully, then ran in a straight line away, to the south, and up another slope. As it neared the top, the foliage changed back to deciduous trees, small growth and scrub. The goblin slipped into one tangle of birch and peered back anxiously.

"If you're waiting for your friend, you'll be waiting a long time, I fear," came a voice behind the goblin. Mather's voice.

The creature shrieked and scrambled out of the birch, one step ahead of the ranger, one step ahead of that deadly blade. The goblin went around a large trunk, but Mather was the quicker, coming around the other way, cutting off the escape. The goblin lifted its club and, forced to fight, tried to assume a defensive posture.

Mather's blade swerved left, then right, and the goblin's club moved with it, in line to block.

But Mather knew Bi'nelle dasada, the elven sword dance, and the goblin did not. The side-to-side movements were naught but feints, for this fighting style, so unlike all the others of the day, focused on movements forward and back. His lead foot perpendicular to his trailing, bracing foot, his front knee bent and his weight out over it, Mather waved the blade again, and then, before the goblin could recognize the move, before it could react with the club, before it could even blink, Mather's elven blade, *Tempest*, stabbed forward, seeming to pull all of his body, extending, extending, past the goblin's meager defenses, through the goblin's torso, to crack hard against the tree trunk behind the creature.

Mather let go of the blade.

The goblin did not fall, even as the last life left it, held firmly in place by the embedded sword.

Mather glanced to the south, down the slope to the tiny village of Dundalis, nestled in the vale beyond. The day was early and bitterly cold, and none of the folk were about, though Mather could see the glow of morning fires through several windows. They wouldn't see him, though, and wouldn't know what he had done here this morn. They knew nothing of goblins, these farmers and woodcutters. Indeed, goblins were rare in these parts; this trio were the first ones the ranger had seen in several years. But that only made them doubly dangerous to the unsuspecting folk of Dundalis, Mather realized. Goblins were not so difficult an enemy when they were caught by surprise, as Mather as Bradwarden had done. They were cowardly creatures, and purely selfish. Thus, when surprised, they would simply scatter. But if they got the upper hand, if they ever found Mather and Bradwarden's camp instead of the other way around, then the ranger and the centaur would indeed find a difficult fight on their hands. And if the goblins ever managed an ambush on the sleepy village of Dundalis ...

Mather shook the unsettling images away, but not after wondering if he should try, at least, to better educate and thus prepare the folk of the village for that grim possibility. The notion merely brought a chuckle to his lips. The folk would never listen. To them, goblins were but fireside tales. Mather looked at the dead creature. Perhaps he should bring it and its companions into the town to show them. Perhaps ...

No, the ranger realized. That was not his place, and the ramifications of such an action could be disastrous—everything from scaring half the folk back to the civilized southland to bringing an army up from Palmaris, a force that would despoil all of this nearly pristine land.

Let the folk remain oblivious. And of the ranger, their secret protector, let the folk continue their perception of him as a mad hermit, an eccentric woodsman, to be shunned whenever he ventured among them.

Better that way, Mather thought. He was performing as the elves had trained him. As he had learned all those years in the elven homeland of Caer'alfar, he did not take his satisfaction in accolades. Mather's strength came from within.

He grasped *Tempest* in both hands and yanked it free, then wiped the shining blade on the ragged clothes of the fallen goblin. He grabbed the ugly little creature with one hand and went down to the north, back into the pine vale, dragging the goblin behind him. By the time he found Bradwarden, the centaur had the other two goblins the pair had killed this day piled with a mound of sticks and dead branches, ready to burn.

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"The first kill was mine," Bradwarden insisted later that night, while he and Mather feasted on venison stew.

"The goblin's blood stained *Tempest*," Mather answered, though his tone showed that he hardly cared for the credit.

"Ah, but it was me arrow that sent the thing sprawlin' to the ground," the centaur reasoned with a big slurp to catch a piece of meat that slipped out the corner of his mouth. He wasn't successful, though, and the venison hit the ground. Bradwarden, with hardly a thought, scooped it right up and popped it back into his mouth. "And lyin' there, as it was, ye're finding an easy time killin' the thing. Too easy, I'm thinking, and so the kill's me own to claim."

"I will split the kill with you," Mather said. "A goblin and a half for each of us this day."

The centaur stopped chewing and eyed the ranger unblinkingly. "Two for me and one for yerself," he argued.

Mather couldn't suppress a smile. He had known Bradwarden for nearly five years now, and the young centaur's overblown sense of pride and wild spirit had been a true amusement to him for all that time. Bradwarden was just into his thirties, which equated to the same stage as a human teenager. Oh, how he acted the part!

"Take two for yourself, then," Mather teased. "After all these years, it seems appropriate that you finally best me in something, even if it is but a minor battle with a trio of weakling goblins, a trio I'd have had an easier time killing myself."

Bradwarden recognized a challenge when he heard one. He dropped his bowl of venison stew—but cupped it as it hit the ground, catching a substantial part of the spillage and rushing it right back to his waiting mouth. He nodded his chin in the direction of a tree stump at the side of the small encampment.

Mather smiled and shook his head. "You'll only get angrier," he remarked, but the centaur was already on his way. With a feigned sigh of resignation, Mather climbed to his feet and rolled up his right sleeve, then took his place opposite Bradwarden and placed his elbow on the stump.

They clasped hands, and the centaur began to pull immediately, gaining a quick advantage. But Mather, the muscles of his forearm bulging with strength from all the years he had

spent squeezing the milk stones to make the elvish wine, locked his arm in place and turned his wrist over the young centaur's. Within a matter of seconds, Mather understood that he would again win their arm-wrestling, and he put a smug smile over his straining companion. The ranger figured that he would enjoy the victories while he could, for his strength was on the wane, while Bradwarden was growing, and growing stronger, every day. Bradwarden was twice Mather's weight, but the centaur would likely gain that much again within a couple more years. Even now, so young, the centaur could beat almost any human at arm wrestling, though his human arms were undeniably his weakest asset.

But Mather Wyndon wasn't just any human, was a ranger, was in fact, the epitome of what a human warrior might achieve in body and soul. Slowly but surely, the centaur's arm slid back and down toward the tree stump.

Bradwarden's eyes went wide in apparent shock as he looked over Mather's shoulder. The ranger, expecting a goblin spear to be flying for his back, glanced around—and the centaur pulled hard, nearly pulling Mather's elbow out of joint and slamming the ranger's hand hard down on the tree stump.

With a howl of pain and outrage, Mather, realizing the ruse, spun back on Bradwarden, and now it was the centaur wearing the smug smile. "Two for me and one for yerself," the centaur said. "And now ye're beaten again." And then he was off, spinning and bucking to ward off Mather's rush, then galloping across the encampment and into the forest.

Laughing all the way, Mather followed him as far as the edge of the camp. "Have your victories, then!" he shouted. "I've got the stew, and that makes me the winner!"

"And what would you know of any victories?" came a melodic voice from behind, a voice like the tinkling of sweet bells, or the drift of perfect harmony on summer breezes through a forest. At first, Mather stood as if turned to stone, stunned that someone, anyone, had been able to sneak up on him so. As he considered that voice, that familiar voice, he came to recognize the truth, and his smile was genuine and wide indeed when he turned about to face the speaker.

She sat on the lowest branch of a tree at the side of the camp, her delicate legs dangling and crossed, her nearly translucent wings fluttering behind her. "Blood of Alturias," she said derisively, a taunt Mather Wyndon had heard so many times, a reference to a deceased distant cousin, one who had been an elven-trained ranger long before him, one who this particular elf, Tuntun by name, had apparently considered far more worthy of the training than she had Mather.

"Tuntun, my dear old friend," he said dryly, feigning resignation, though it was obvious that he was overjoyed to see the elf.

"Never that," the elf replied.

"My mentor, then," Mather replied.,

"Hardly."

"My teacher, then," Mather agreed.

"Unfortunately," came the curt response, but Mather understood the joke behind it. Tuntun had been, perhaps, his most critical instructor in his years with the elves, and, despite that she weighed nowhere near to a hundred pounds, had bested him many times in sparring matches. Keen of wit and of skill, the delicate elf had put more than a few bruises on Mather Wyndon, body and pride!

"What brings Tuntun so far from Caer'alfar?" Mather asked. "And does she come alone?"

"Would she need any escort in these lands full of bumbling, stupid humans?" the elf replied.

Mather bowed, granting her that. Indeed, he knew that Tuntun could pass all the way through the human lands and back again, stealing food wherever she chose, sleeping wherever she decided was most comfortable, without being spotted once by anybody.

"And why am I so blessed with your visit?" the ranger asked.

Tuntun half-jumped, half-flew, down from her perch, going at once to the cauldron and sniffing it, then curling her features in obvious disgust.

"Were you just curious as to how I was getting along?" Mather pressed. "It has been three years, at least, since I have seen you or any of the Touel'alfar."

"That is the joy of training rangers," the unrelenting Tuntun went on. "Once we are done with them, we set them back to their own kind and do not have to smell them again."

Mather let it go with a chuckle. He knew that behind the gruff words and constant insults, Tuntun, perhaps more than any of the other elves, truly cared for him. Tuntun, though, had always equated any show of the softer emotions with weakness, and both of them understood that weakness could quickly spell disaster for one working as a ranger.

"And yet, here you are," Mather said, his smile as unrelenting as Tuntun's insults, "come to share my meal and my company."

"Come with news," Tuntun corrected. "And to see how you fare with the child of Andos and Dervia," she added, referring to Bradwarden's parents, whom Mather had never met.

"Bradwarden grows stronger each day," Mather replied, and even as he spoke, as if on cue, a beautiful, haunting music drifted on the breeze. "And his piping improves," the ranger added.

Despite her demeanor, Tuntun smiled at the sound of the centaur's distant music, a wondrous tune indeed, and nodded her approval. "He has his mother's gift for song, and his father's strength."

"A fine companion," Mather agreed. He sat down and picked up his stew, then, and Tuntun did likewise, lifting Bradwarden's abandoned bowl. Neither spoke for a long while, both just enjoying their meal and the continuing melody of Bradwarden's piping.

"I am returning to Caer'alfar," the elf explained much later on, after Mather had told her of his more recent exploits in the region, including the fight that day with the goblin trio. "I meant to go this very night and should not have veered from my path to speak with you. Too long have I been away."

"But you did come, and with news, so you said," Mather replied.

"Do you remember when you were a child?"

"When Tuntun used to stop me from eating my meals hot, or even warm?" Mather returned with a grin.

"Before that," the elf replied in all seriousness.

Mather stared at her hard. He had been only a few years old when the elves had taken him in, rescued him from a mauling by a bear, nurtured him back to health and then trained him as a ranger. He didn't remember the bear attack, just the elves' retelling of it. Try as he might, he could remember nothing of the time before that, other than small uncapturable images.

"You had family," Tuntun explained.

Mather nodded.

"Younger siblings, and a brother who was born some years after you left them," Tuntun went on.

Mather shrugged, hardly remembering.

"His name is Olwan," Tuntun explained. "Olwan Wyndon. I thought you should be told."

"Why? And why now?"

"Because Olwan has decided to make the Timberlands his home," Tuntun explained. "You will know him when you see him, for there is indeed a resemblance. He rides north with his family and two other wagons, headed for the settlement called Dundalis."

"This late in the season?" Mather asked incredulously, for few ventured north of Caer Tinella after the beginning of the ninth month, and here they were, halfway through the eleventh, and those who knew the region somewhat surprised that winter had not yet begun in earnest. It was not wise to be caught on the road during the Timberland winter.

"I said he was your brother," Tuntun replied dryly. "I did not say that he was intelligent. They are on the road, two days yet from the town, and a storm is growing in the west."

Mather didn't reply, didn't blink.

"I thought you should know," Tuntun said again, and she rose up and straightened her clothes.

"And am I to tell him, this Olwan, who I am?"

Tuntun looked at the man as though she did not understand the question.

"About my life?" Mather asked. "About who I am? That we are brothers?"

Tuntun held her hands out and scrunched up her delicate face. "That choice is Mather's," she explained. "We gave you gifts: your life, your training, your elven title, Riverhawk. But we did not take your tongue in payment, nor your free will. Mather will do as Mather chooses."

"To tell him that I was trained by elves?" the ranger asked.

"He will think you crazy, as do all the others, no doubt," Tuntun said with a laugh. "We have found that the Alpinadoran barbarians to the north and the To-gai horsemen to the south have oft been accepting of rangers, but the men of the central lands, the kingdom you call Honce-the-Bear, so smug in their foolish religion, so superior in their war machines and great cities, have little tolerance for such childish tales. Tell Olwan your brother what you will, or tell him nothing at all. That, you may find, could prove the easier course."

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"They'll not make the towns before it breaks," Bradwarden said to Mather, the two of them watching the caravan of three wagons trudging along the northern road. They were still ten miles south of Dundalis, half a day's travel, and Mather knew that the centaur spoke truly. Tuntun had returned to him before the dawn, warning of an impending storm, a big one, and also warning him that she had seen quite a bit of goblin sign in the region. Apparently, the trio Mather and Bradwarden had killed were not the whole of the group.

Mather had not disagreed with either grim prediction. He, too, had noted signs of the impending storm, and of the goblins, and all of this with his brother making slow time along the road to the south.

So Mather had come out, and Bradwarden with him, to watch over the caravan. When he looked to the western sky, dark clouds gathering like some invading enemy, and when he felt the bite of the increasing northeastern wind through layers of clothing, he thought it a good thing indeed that he had not waited for their arrival about Dundalis.

"I cannot go down to them," Bradwarden remarked. "Whatever ye're thinkin' ye might do to help them through the storm, ye'll be doin' alone."

Mather nodded his understanding and agreement. "And with the weather worsening, I fear that Dundalis might become a target for the desperate goblins," he said. "So go back and look over the town. Find Tuntun, if she is still about, and make sure that you keep a watch."

With a nod, the centaur galloped away. Mather continued shadowing the caravan, silently debating whether he should go down to help them construct some kind of shelter or whether he should just hope. Another hour, another couple of miles, meandered by.

The first few snowflakes drifted down; the wind's bite increased.

And then it hit, as if the sky itself had simply torn apart, dumping its contents earthward. What had been a gentle flurry became, in mere seconds, a driving blizzard of wind-whipped, stinging snow. Mather continued to watch the wagons, nodding his approval of the skill shown by the lead driver, the man bunching his cloak against the cold and forcing the team on.

Another mile slipped past slowly. By then, three inches of snow covered the trail.

"You can get there," Mather said quietly, urging the wagons on, for now they slowed and men scrambled together, likely discussing the possibility of stopping to ride out the storm. But they were southerners—likely not one of them had ever before been north of Palmaris, which was some three hundred miles away—and they couldn't appreciate the fury of a Timberland snowstorm. If they circled their wagons now and huddled

against the storm, they might find themselves stuck out here, with no help coming from Dundalis, or anywhere else, for many days, even weeks.

Winter would only get rougher. They'd never survive.

Mather pulled the cowl of his cloak low, as much to hide his face as to ward the cold, and rushed down to join the group. "Are you looking for Dundalis?" he asked in greeting as he approached, yelling loudly so that the men could hear him, though they were but a dozen feet from him.

"Dundalis, or any place to hide from the storm," said the lead driver, a large and strong man, a man who, as Tuntun had said, bore some resemblance to Mather Wyndon.

"Dundalis is your only choice," Mather replied, running up to grab the bridle of one of the horses. "You've got five miles to go."

"We'll not make it," another man cried.

"You have to make it," Mather replied sternly. "Even if you must desert the wagons and follow me on foot."

"But all our possessions ..." the man started.

Mather cut him off and looked directly at Olwan as he spoke. "To stay out here is to die," he explained. "So tie your wagons together, front to back, and drive your teams—and drive them hard."

"I can hardly see the road before us," Olwan replied.

"I will guide you." As Mather finished, a haunting melody came up about them, music carried on, and cutting through, the howling wind.

"And what is that?" the stubborn man on the second wagon yelled.

"Another guide," Mather replied, silently applauding Bradwarden, understanding that the centaur was using the music to help Mather keep his bearings.

On they went, against the driving snow, against the howling, stinging wind. Mather, his body numb from the cold, pulled the lead horses along, kicking through the piling snow. Several hours passed, and still they were a mile away, and now the snow was a foot deep all about them and before them, and the afternoon was fast giving way to evening.

It grew colder, the wind only increased, and the snow did not relent.

Mather hardly knew where he was, the snow stealing landmarks. He plodded on, yanking at the reluctant horses, and then he found that he was not alone, that his brother, with equal determination, was beside him, pulling hard.

"How far?" Olwan yelled. Mather hardly heard him.

The ranger glanced around, searching, searching, for something, for anything, that would give him some indication. Then he saw a tree, and he knew that tree, and he recognized that they had but one climb to go, a few hundred yards and no more. But it would be a difficult climb, and by the time they capped the last ridge, darkness would be deep about them.

They fought and scrambled for every foot of ground. At one point, the trailing wagon slipped off the trail and hooked on a tree root. They thought they would have to cut it free, but stubborn Mather, now thinking of this storm as an enemy, would not surrender anything. He went behind the wagon and grabbed it with hands that could hardly feel, and with strength beyond that of nearly any living man, he began to lift.

And then he was not alone, Olwan beside him, setting his legs and his back and hauling with all of his strength, and somehow, impossibly, the two brought the wheel over the root and shoved the wagon back onto the trail.

Mather glanced at Olwan, at his brother, at the strength of the man's body and the determination on his face. He wondered then what feats they two might accomplish together, allowed himself to fantasize about the two of them hunting goblins in concert. Perhaps he could give to Olwan some of the gifts the Touel'alfar had given to him. Perhaps he could tutor the man on the ways of the forest and the fighting styles that would elevate him above other warriors.

But that was for another day, Mather promptly reminded himself as Olwan returned his gaze and smiled.

"We did well together," the man said, a voice strong and resonant.

Mather smiled in reply. "But we've a ways yet to go," he reminded, and they each went right back to work, urging on the horses, pulling hard the wagons, and somehow, against the odds and against the fury of the storm, they crested the ridge and rolled and slid into Dundalis proper. Mather pointed out the common house.

"You will be welcomed there," he assured Olwan.

"Are you not accompanying us?" the man asked incredulously.

"This is not my place, though the folk here are friendly enough to those who come in peace," the ranger replied.

"Where, then, will you be?" Olwan asked. "Which house?"

"None in town."

"Surely you don't mean to go back out in this storm?

"I am safe enough," Mather assured him, and with a smile and a pat on the man's arm, the ranger started away.

"And what is your name?" Olwan called after him.

Mather almost answered, but then considered the possible implications of revealing a name that might be familiar to Olwan Wyndon. All of the townsfolk knew him merely as "the dirty hunter," so that is what he replied. With a smile to assure Olwan once again that all was well with him, he melted into the snowstorm.

And what an entrance winter had made! Snow piled and piled, blown into drifts twice the height of a man, whipping and stinging so ferociously that Mather could hardly see a line of towering pine trees, though they were barely twenty yards away. He crawled under one large specimen, its branches wide, the lower ones pushed right down to the ground by the heavy snow. With fingers that could hardly feel, he fumbled in his pack for kindling and flint and steel. Soon he had a small fire going. He wouldn't get much sleep this night, he realized, for he had to keep the fire burning and had to tend it constantly to ensure that it did not ignite the tree about him.

But that was his way, his calling, and as his hands began to thaw and to hurt, he accepted that, too, as the lot of a ranger.

He would spend the night here, and in the morning, would dig himself out and perhaps go to Dundalis and speak with his brother.

Perhaps.

The snow continued that night but lightened, and the wind died away at last to a few remnant gusts. On one of those gusts came a cry of anguish that sliced the heart of Mather Wyndon, a scream of pain and fear from a voice that he knew well.

He drew out his sword and used it to lead the way through the tangle of branch and snow, pushing out into the frigid air, trying to orient himself and determine the direction of Bradwarden's howl. The wind was from the northeast still, and it had carried Bradwarden's cry, so Mather set out that way, circumventing Dundalis, the smoke of the many chimneys thick in the air. Soon he found a path cut through the drifts—by goblins, he knew, though he could hardly see on this dark night. He didn't dare light a torch, fearing to make himself a target, but he understood his disadvantage here. Goblins were creatures of caves and deep tunnels. They could see much better in the dark than even an elven-trained ranger.

Mather was not surprised when he came through one large drift and caught a flicker of movement to the side, a missile flying straight for him.

He sent his energy into *Tempest*, and the sword flared with angry light. He brought the blade whipping about, intercepting the hurled spear and knocking it harmlessly aside, and then slashed back, deflecting a second.

The third got through.

In the brutal cold, Mather hardly felt the impact, but he knew it was bad, for the spear had caught him in the side, under the ribs, its tip driving front to back. When he grasped at the bleeding wound, grabbing the shaft to steady it, for every twitch sent a wave of agony rolling through him, he felt the slick point of the weapon sticking out of his back.

He hardly realized that he was lying down now, on his back in the snow, staring up at the descending flakes, and suddenly, so very, very cold.

Movement nearby, the goblins rushing in for the kill, brought him back to his senses, made him understand that death was imminent.

But not now, Mather determined. Not like this. With a growl, he snapped apart the spear shaft just above the wound entrance and fought away the surge of blackness that threatened to engulf him. Growling still, teeth clenched in sheer determination, he closed his hand upon *Tempest* and lay very still, waiting, waiting.

Three goblins came upon him, laughing and hooting, and then howling in surprise as Mather sprang up at them like a cornered wolverine. He whipped and stabbed *Tempest* in a furious flurry, hardly bothering to aim, and when his sword flew above the closest ducking creature, leaving it an opening on his left side, he simply punched out his free hand with all his strength, connecting solidly on the goblin's jaw and launching it to the snow.

Mather let his rage take him, knowing that if he stopped and considered his movements, if he played out this fight with insight and thoughtfulness, his pain might ovewhelm him. Thus, he was surprised mere seconds later, to find that all three goblins were down, two dead and the third groaning. Mather moved for that one, thinking to make it tell him where he could find Bradwarden, but then he heard the centaur cry out again and marked the direction well.

He killed the goblin with a clean stroke.

And then he fell to his knees, the waves of pain buckling him, the dark and cold weakness creeping into his every joint. He looked down at the bloody spear stump. He wanted to pull it out, but understood that the barbs would take half his belly with it. He wanted to push it through and knew that soon he would have to, but he understood that to extract that point now would be fatal, for he would likely bleed to death before he ever found help.

He looked back in the direction of Dundalis, peaceful, oblivious Dundalis. Not so far away, he thought, and he realized that he could make it there, and that someone there would tend him, his brother, perhaps.

Bradwarden cried out again, and Mather took his first steps ... away from Dundalis.

Half blind with pain, his limbs numb with cold, he plowed on. His blood came thick in his mouth, that sickly sweet taste promising death.

He spat it out.

Purely focused, beyond pain and weakness, he knew where he was and could guess easily enough from the direction of Bradwarden's cry where the goblins would be. On he went, refusing to surrender to the pain and the cold, refusing to die. He tried to pick his path carefully but wound up having to burst right through snow drifts, the wet stuff only increasing the cold's grip on him. But on he went, and some time later, he saw a campfire, and then, as he neared, saw the silhouettes of several goblins, and one large form, balled in a net and hanging above the camp, above the fire.

He could only pray that he was not too late.

The goblins had their eyes turned to Bradwarden, the centaur squirming in the heat and smoke as flames licked at him.

And then Mather was among them, and one, and then another, fell dead to *Tempest's* mighty cut.

The others did not flee, though, as goblins often did, for they outnumbered this obviously wounded man seven to one, and in this snow and in this cold, they had nowhere to run. On they came, howling and hooting.

A feinted slice, a turn of the wrist and a straight ahead stab, and *Tempest* took down another.

Mather backhanded away a club strike from the right, but a third goblin, running right over its dying companion, thrust with its spear, inside the ranger's defenses. A quick retraction of the sword severed the spear shaft even as the point dug into Mather's shoulder, but the goblin thrust took the strength from his arm.

Quick to improvise, Mather simply grabbed up the sword in his left hand and stabbed the goblin in the face, then brought it about powerfully to take a club from an attacker at his left. The

ranger pivoted to square up with the creature. With a roar of defiance against the blackness that edged his faltering vision, he brought the sword up in an arc and then down diagonally atop the goblin's shoulder, so powerfully that the enchanted silvered blade slashed through the creature's collarbone, down through its spine, cracking ribs apart and tearing flesh. Another growl and Mather rolled about, the fine blade finishing the cut, exiting the goblin's other side and dropping the two bloody pieces to the snow.

But four other goblins were about him in a frenzy, two whacking at him with clubs and the others stabbing him with spears.

He connected with one, or thought he had, but took a thump on the back of his head that sent his thoughts spinning, that brought the darkness closer … too close.

And then Mather knew. He could not win this time. Through blurry eyes, he saw the goblin before him slump into the snow, but he took no comfort, for another spear found him, digging into his hip.

He knew that Bradwarden would die if he went down, reminded himself of that pointedly, and that thought alone kept him on his feet. He blocked a spear thrust but was hit again on the side of the head. He staggered away, somehow managing to hold his footing.

But now one eye was closed, and darkness crept at the edges of his other eye, narrowing and blurring his vision to the point where he could not even see his enemies, could see nothing at all except the pinpoint of light that was the goblin's fire.

Mather made for that light.

The goblins pursued, hooting and howling, stabbing and smacking the defenseless man through every step.

But on he went, determinedly putting one foot in front of the other, stepping, stepping, feeling no pain, pushing it away, burying it under the mantle of responsibility, as a ranger and a friend. He hardly saw the light now, but heard the crackle of the fire and knew he was close.

He was hit again, on the back of the head; the blackness swallowed him.

He felt himself falling, falling, thought of Olwan and the times they would not share, and he thought of Bradwarden.

Mather roared one last defiant roar and forced himself to stand straight and tall. He swung about, the slicing *Tempest* forcing the goblins back and that buying him the time he needed to turn again to the fire, to look above it, and using more memory than vision, to aim his cut.

He felt the sword bite at the supporting rope, felt the rush of weight as Bradwarden dropped before him, brushing him and throwing him to the ground.

Then, from somewhere far away, he heard the centaur's outraged roar, heard the goblins' shrieks of fear, heard the trample of hooves, the cries of pain.

And then he knew … peace. A cool blackness.

It all came back to Mather in that last fleeting moment, memories of his childhood before the Touel'alfar, his times with Tuntun and the other elves, his days silently protecting Dundalis and Weedy Meadow, unappreciated, but hardly caring.

Doing as he had been trained to do, acting the role of ranger, and of friend.

As he had this night.

❖❖❖

Olwan Wyndon, his wife, and their infant son, Elbryan, slept peacefully that night in Dundalis, they and their companion family, the Aults, warmly welcomed by the folk. Listening to the wind howling futilely against the solid common house walls, the rhythmic breathing of his loved ones, Olwan knew he had found his home, a place where his child could grow strong and straight.

He didn't know that he had lost a brother that night, didn't know that any goblins had been about, didn't know that any goblins even existed.

It would stay that way for Olwan, and for all the folk of Dundalis—save the very old, who remembered goblins—for more than a decade.

❖❖❖

Following the trail of carnage, Tuntun found a tearful Bradwarden piling stones on Mather's cold body the next morning.

"It's the only place," the centaur explained, referring to the thick and well-tended grove about them, a special place for Mather, where the trees had blocked much of the snow. "Riverhawk's place, for all time."

"Blood of Alturias," Tuntun spat, using the insult as a shield against emotions that threatened to overwhelm her. How many times had she said that to Mather over the years?

And how many times must she watch a friend, a ranger, die? There were never more than six rangers at any one time, but Tuntun had lived for centuries, and had witnessed so many of them put into the cold ground. None had hurt more than this one, hurt more than Mather, the boy she had personally trained, whom she had cultivated into so fine and strong a man. She thought about her own mortality then, the long, long years in the life of an elf, and, ironically, a smile crept across her delicate features.

"A man might live but a day's worth of life in an entire year," she said to Bradwarden. "Or a year's worth in a single day. Riverhawk had a long life."

Despite his busy writing schedule, Bob Salvatore still finds time for a weekly D&D® game with his buddies, known collectively as The Circle of Swords. As of this writing, they're about to start Zeb Cook's classic B6: The Veiled Society.

THE HORRORS OF M.R. JAMES

Formidable Visitants

Monday night a toad came into my study: and, though nothing has so far seemed to link itself with this appearance, I feel that it may not be quite prudent to brood over topics which may open the interior eye to the presence of more formidable visitants.

—M. R. James,
"Stories I Have Tried to Write"

by
Michael D. Winkle

illustrated by
Mark Nelson

MONTAGUE RHODES JAMES (1862–1936) was one of England's most accomplished writers of supernatural tales. A scholar and antiquarian like most of his protagonists, he graduated from King's College in 1887 and headed Eton from 1918 until his death. He produced only one or two stories a year, usually to be read aloud on Christmas Eve, and his book *Collected Ghost Stories* has been reprinted many times.

M.R. James' world appears mundane, sedate, and ordinary, full of upper-crust English folk leading quiet, happy, almost smug lives. An unseen world waits in dark cathedrals and empty fields, however—even in simple old cabinets and quiet libraries—a world inhabited by spirits and creatures that pop out into the calm English countryside with the least provocation. No long rituals or incantations are needed to summon James' monsters; merely reading an ancient inscription or concentrating too long on curious carvings can unleash his horrors.

The people of James' landscape have the uncanny ability to see an unearthly creature, describe what it looks like—and what it does to its victims—so that the reader knows what is happening, yet they never have any idea themselves that they have witnessed something horrible. If PCs collect eye-witness accounts from local folk in a James-flavored campaign, a NPC will never come out and say, for example, "a zombie rose out of the earth and dragged Wilkins down." He will ramble on about how Wilkins was on his afternoon hike, and suddenly he stopped and shook his leg as if he had gotten it caught in a tree-root. He will mention how Wilkins then waved his arms, and the witness waved back, and then the witness glanced at his watch, and when he looked up again, Wilkins was gone. Letting NPCs hit all around the mark can be a fun challenge for a DM.

PCs might encounter demons and monsters within full view of the local townspeople and find not a finger raised to help them. At best, people might stop and stare, wondering what the PCs are making all that racket about.

The following creatures from M.R. James' tales would fit well into the Gothic Earth campaign world, being mostly products of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, but any AD&D® setting could host these formidable visitants.

Michael D. Winkle was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1959, and has lived there most of his life. He is the author of several science fiction and fantasy stories.

Sawfly, Demonic

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Swarm
ACTIVITY CYCLES:	Any
DIET:	Blood
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2–4)
TREASURE:	J, K, L
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1–6
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12, Fly 12 (B)
HIT DICE:	2
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Blood drain; insect swarm
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Shrinking
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5–6′ tall)
MORALE:	Steady (11–12)
XP VALUE:	175

These creatures were let into the world accidentally by foolish practitioners of black magic. They resemble reddish-brown Daddy Longlegs with wings, and they can stand upright on their spindly limbs (giving them a height of five or six feet).

Combat: A sawfly bites for 1–4 hp damage, and on the following round it causes 1–4 hp damage automatically, due to blood drainage. Afterward it attempts to bite again. Once per day a Sawfly can summon a swarm of gnats and flies to assault its enemies (the equivalent of the *summon swarm* spell).

A sawfly can shrink at will to the size of an ordinary insect. If a sawfly loses more than 50% of its hit points, it shrinks automatically. If any normal gnats or flies are in the area, it mingles with them and becomes nearly impossible to spot. Searchers can detect them by rolling under their Intelligence score on 1d100. In its diminutive state, the sawfly can dodge any attack if it saves vs. wands. However, any successful hit crushes it.

Habitat/Society: Demonic sawflies instinctively desire to swarm with others of their kind, but such are rare on the Prime Material Plane. Unlike most insects, the females lay merely one or two eggs per year, so only a handful of sawflies are found in any one area. To make up for this low population density, sawflies join normal swarms of gnats and flies and follow them on their rounds. They need blood to survive, however, so they will abandon their adopted swarms to feed.

Sawflies live longer than most insects, often 50 years. They go into hibernation in times of need, and they can survive in this condition for as long as one century. The passage of any warm-blooded creature within 20 feet of a hibernating sawfly awakens it, and the insect attacks ravenously.

"... there was -- I don't know how to put it -- a sensation of long thin arms, or legs, or feelers, all about my face, and neck, and body ... I tore at the curtain and somehow let in enough light to be able to see something waving which I knew was an insect's leg, by the shape of it: but, Lord, what a size! Why, the beast must have been as tall as I am."

-- "The Residence at Whitminster"

Since demonic sawflies lay eggs infrequently, they guard their broods jealously. Sawfly eggs can be found hidden in out-of-the-way nooks and crannies of buildings, castles, or other relatively dry shelters. A sawfly defending its eggs gains +2 on all attacks and saves.

Ecology: Sawflies may have been parasites on the monstrous inhabitants of another plane, as mosquitoes and fleas are parasites in the Prime Material Plane. Due to their shrinking abilities, sawflies infiltrate castles and houses as easily as ordinary insects. They are smart enough to realize that some cunning is needed to attack humans and other intelligent creatures. They often hide in cupboards, closets, or cabinets, ready to spring out on unsuspecting victims. Such hiding places may contain a small amount of treasure.

The blood and eggs of a sawfly can be used in *enlarge* or *reduce* spells or potions. Its wings, ground up, can be used as components of spells such as *summon swarm*.

Living Hair

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLES:	Darkness night
DIET:	Hair, fur
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8–10)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	5
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–6/1–6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Strangulation
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Champion (15–16)
XP VALUE:	975

A person who is extremely vain concerning the appearance of his hair can create a living hair creature. Such a person must use strands of his hair as material in the creation of a curtain or rug, and the rug must contain certain magic sigils as part of the design.

Sages suggest that the old folk tales about corpses growing hair after death, sometimes enough to fill the coffin, are actually accounts of living hair forming spontaneously. Once having grown in the womb of the grave, living hair can trickle out through the merest cracks and reach the surface world.

Combat: Living hair appears as a humanoid mass of matted hair. It can break up into individual fibers and pass through cracks and under doors, but it requires 2–8 rounds to reform its manlike shape, so it tries to hide in a dark corner or nook until ready to strike. It can move silently (90%), hide in shadows (80%), detect noises (50%), and climb walls (95%).

In battle, living hair strikes with its two shapeless fists. If discovered before it has fully formed, it can fight but causes only 1 hp damage per blow on the first round, 1–2 points on the second, 1–3 on the third, 1–4 on the fourth, and finally it reaches its full strength of 1–6 hp per blow.

If living hair strikes with an attack roll of 18 or higher, it begins strangling the victim for an automatic 2–8 hp per round. This is not simply a matter of seizing the victim by the neck—wads of hair actually enter the nostrils and windpipe! The victim—or other characters—must roll under his or her Strength on 1d20 to yank the monster loose.

These monsters regenerate at the rate of 2 hp per round. Blunt weapons cause only half-damage, but fire-based attacks inflict double damage to the creature. Even if killed, it is possible that the living hair grows back in 2–20 days, unless care is taken to destroy every strand of hair forming it

"It was in the attitude of one that had crept along the floor on its belly, and it was, so far as could be recollected, a human figure. But of the face which was now rising to within a few inches of his own no feature was discernible, only hair."

-- "The Diary of Mr. Poynter"

Habitat/Society: These monsters are loners, mostly due to their rarity but also because they carry a residue of vanity from the humans or demi-humans who gave them birth. This vanity has soured into a general hatred of all humanoid races, and they actively try to destroy characters with higher than average Charisma. They inhabit artificial structures like castles, manors, and dungeons—another memory of their "parents."

Ecology: Although not natural beings, living hair creatures have stepped into an almost untapped ecological niche: they can utilize cast-off hair and fur in their bodies, materials that most creatures find difficult to digest.

Bits of living hair are used by wizards in the creation of magical ropes, such as those of climbing, constriction, and entanglement.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate to tropical
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any (usually night)
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Very
TREASURE:	U
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	6
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 or 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–4/1–4 or special
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spiders (see below)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Elite (13–14)
XP VALUE:	1,400

"He had a very nasty bald head . . . the streaks of hair across it were much less like hair than cobwebs . . . his face . . . was perfectly dry, and the eyes were very deep-sunk; and over them, from the eyebrows to the cheek-bone, there were cobwebs—thick."
—"The Tractate Middoth"

Some evil wizards of 6th level or higher prepare themselves- or herself before death to become web-spectres. The process takes one year per level, and the would-be spectre must arrange to have himself interred after death in an underground chamber, sitting or standing in a lifelike pose. Any treasure the spectre possesses is found here.

A web-spectre appears as a humanoid mass of spider webs, dirty from collected dust and grit, complete with a colony of 30–120 (3d4 × 10) spiders living in its body. Unlike some species of undead, it can shamble about in broad daylight. A particularly daring spectre can even pass for a human, if it is fully clothed and wears gloves and head-covering gear.

Combat: The web-spectre hits with its malformed fists for 1–4 hp damage, or it can opt to grab instead. A grab counts as an attack but inflicts no damage. Instead the spectre releases 3–18 spiders onto its victim. The spiders are small (AC 10, 1 hp, THAC0 20, Dmg 1 hp), but their numbers can overwhelm a character.

The web-spectre is silent and stealthy. Opponents suffer a –3 penalty to surprise rolls (1–8 on 1d10). It can cast wizard spells at the same level it knew in life. It can *teleport without error* twice per day, appearing in the most unexpected places, such as stairways, cupboards, and attics. It is immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* and cold-based spells. It is immune to poisons and paralyzation. It can be turned as a spectre, and a splash of holy water inflicts 2–8 hp damage upon it. It can be hit by ordinary weapons, and fire causes double damage to the creature. However, it can absorb any spider webbing within a hundred-yard radius to repair its body, at a rate of 2 hp per round. (There are few places on the Prime Material Plane totally free of cobwebs; even a grassy meadow is inhabited by thousands of tiny spiders.) Any one area becomes depleted of webbing in 2d6 rounds (longer in well-webbed places like crypts and dungeons), so a spectre tries to end a conflict quickly, or at least shift the battle to a new location when hard pressed.

If reduced to 0 hit points, the web-spectre's unnatural life-force can sometimes (75%) abandon its matted silk body and create another one elsewhere. To prevent this, a *remove curse, abjure,* or similar spell must be cast on the tattered remains.

Habitat/Society: A web-spectre is essentially a minor form of lich, and this form of quasi-immortality is sometimes chosen by mages who are not powerful enough to become true liches. They are normally solitary beings, but web-spectres will make contact with wizards, liches, and other characters in attempts to attain new spells or other knowledge. They do not actively seek to destroy life as do many undead creatures, but they are easily angered and seek revenge on any character they perceive as having wronged them.

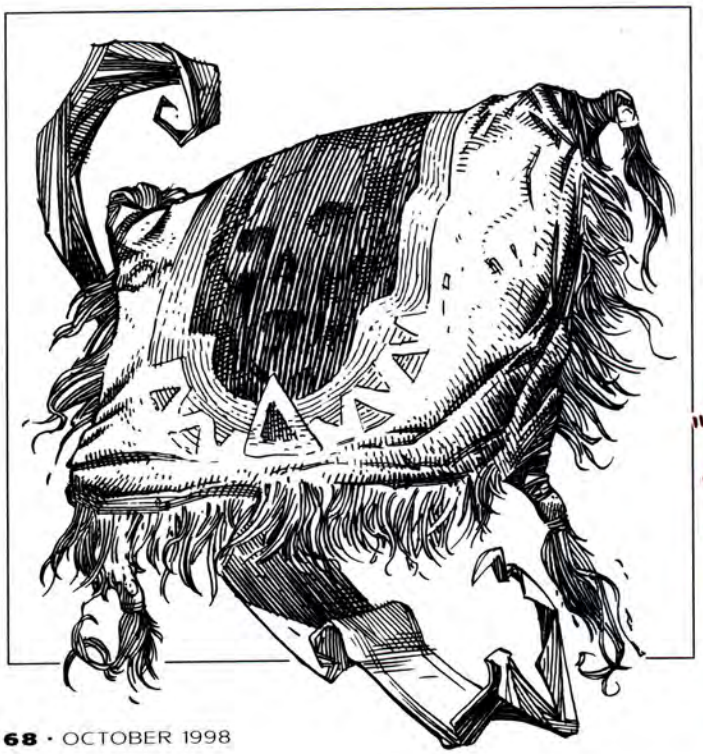
Ecology: Like all forms of undead, web-spectres have no place in nature. They have a special rapport with arachnids, and sometimes they employ monstrous spiders as guards.

Death Linen

	Killer Pillow	Flannel Beast	Sheet
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any (mostly indoors)	Any (mostly indoors)	Any (mostly indoors)
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any (mostly night)	Any (mostly night)	Any (mostly night)
DIET:	Nil	Nil	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Average	Average	Average
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil	Chaotic evil	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1	1	1
ARMOR CLASS:	9	9	9
MOVEMENT:	6	12	12
HIT DICE:	2	4	6
THAC0:	16	15	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2	1–3	1–4/1–4/1–2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Suffocation	Poison suffocation	Poison suffocation
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	T to M	M	M
MORALE:	Elite (13–14)	Elite (13–14)	Elite (13–14)
XP VALUE:	175	420	1,400

When lying in bed at night, wondering what those strange creeks and pops are in the darkness, who hasn't felt just a little more secure by drawing up the covers? Even the security of bedclothes is taken from us by death linens.

Death Linens are beings of living cloth, usually sheets, pillows, and other items associated with beds. They have been infected with latent psychic forces born of nightmares. They are normally active at night, but they can lurk in cupboards or laundries and assault people at any time. They come in a variety of sizes that can be divided into three broad categories:



Killer Pillow

The killer pillow is a fluffy and inviting-looking animated pillow that humps along like a huge amoeba. It can jump up to 20 feet once per turn in an attempt to catch a victim, but normally it lies dormant, hoping a victim chooses to rest on it.

Combat: The killer pillow has 2 Hit Dice and can crinkle its surface into a sort of face, with which it "bites" for 1–2 hp damage. If it strikes with a roll of 18 or better, it wraps itself around the head of any creature up to size L and begins suffocating him or her, inflicting an automatic 1–4 hp damage per round. The victim (or another helping him or her) must make a Strength check on 3d6 to dislodge it, or else attack it. Any attack on a pillow that is smothering someone is also considered an attack on the victim, although at –2 to hit, and doing only half damage.

If a character goes to sleep on a killer pillow, the pillow's first hit is automatic, and it begins smothering immediately. The sleeping victim is actually affected by a weak *suggestion* spell; the character must save vs. magic once per round to see if he or she awakens. If not …

"He was stretched out in the midst of the bed, on his back, without any disorder … His hands, I think, were even crossed on his breast. The only thing not usual was that nothing was to be seen of his face, the two ends of the pillow or bolster appearing to be closed quite over it." -- "Two Doctors"

Habitat/Society: Killer pillows are "born" by accident and do not seek out other pillows or death linens. Although solitary by nature, they may not be the only death linens in a building (especially a large structure, like a castle), since the linens in general are created by similar circumstances.

Ecology: Killer pillows have no place in the natural order of things. They need no nourishment and attack because they are literally bad dreams in physical form. Some wizards have learned to create killer pillows from deathbed linens and control them; these are often sent as "gifts" to people they would like to see killed. Threads from any death linen can be used in *sleep*, *charm*, or *suggestion* spells.

Flannel Beast

The flannel beast often hides in pantries and closets where towels, bedclothes, and linens are kept. It resembles a stack of towels or rags (90% undetectable by visual inspection) until it moves, whereupon it looks more like a tattered ferret or snake.

Combat: The flannel beast has 4 Hit Dice. It bites for 1–3 hp damage, and its fangs are coated with a powerful (type E) venom. It can wrap its long body around a victim and suffocate him as does a killer pillow, while simultaneously trying to bite.

Habitat/Society: Like all the death linens, flannel beasts are loners. They can sometimes be found in tombs or sepulchers, having formed from winding sheets.

Ecology: Like killer pillows, flannel beasts have no place in nature. They attack living creatures but do not eat them. Certain wizards and clerics have learned to create and control flannel beasts; these are usually employed as assassins or tomb guardians.

Sheet

The sheet takes on a disturbingly humanoid form when it strikes, moving at a surprisingly swift pace, and it gyrates and flops as it moves, a most disturbing spectacle. Anyone seeing a humanoid death linen must make a Fear check. Unlike its lesser cousins, which prefer to stay indoors, it thinks nothing of chasing a victim across the countryside.

Combat: The sheet (6 Hit Dice) strikes twice in combat with its ragged fists for 1–4 hp damage. It can suffocate if it hits with an 18 or better. It can also bite, doing 1–2 hp damage, and its fangs, too, are poisonous (Class C).

Habitat/Society: Sheets are much more apt to wander across the countryside than their smaller cousins. They need no nourishment; they assault or avoid living creatures for reasons known only to themselves.

"What he chiefly remembers about it is a horrible, an intensely horrible, face of crumpled linen. With formidable quickness it moved into the middle of the room, and, as it groped and waved, one corner of its draperies swept across Parkins's face."

--"Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad"

Ecology: Like all death linens, the sheet holds no place in the natural order. Certain magical items have been created to control such beings, especially whistles inscribed with magical runes. Bits of them can be used in rites to create zombies and other undead beings.

All death linens have vulnerabilities that PCs can exploit: Fire causes double damage to them. A gallon or more of water sloshed on a death linen affects it as the *slow* spell. If a character strikes it with a roll of 19 or 20, the creature is stunned for one round, and it will flop to the floor in an inert pile. Any attacks made in the following round automatically hit.

Even after it is reduced to 0 hit points, a death linen's life force might enter another pillow or sheet in the next 1–12 months—a 10% chance per month. After all, we all sleep, and we often have nightmares, which strengthen the strange beings. If a slain death linen does not reappear within one year, the life-force has dissipated.

THE UNSEEN PROTECTOR

Palarandusk

The Unseen Protector wields spells far beyond the norm for ancient gold dragons and is seldom seen by humans, few of whom readily discern (or believe) what he has become.

by
Ed Greenwood

illustrated by
Storn Cook

NESTLED IN A HIGH, NARROW VALLEY BETWEEN three of the westernmost peaks of the Sword Mountains, not far from The High Road southeast of Leilon, is Ieirithymbul, a little-known village of gnomes. The peaks are known locally as Mount Sternhelm (the tallest, to the north), Mount Ardabad (on the east), and Mount Pheldaer (to the west). The valley and the stream that flows through it (only to vanish into a sinkhole, Braeder's Pit, a few miles to the south) are both known as Felrenden.

Folk in Leilon know the names of the peaks and that there are gnomes "somewhere in the mountains, and it's not wise to make trouble with them," but most of them couldn't tell you whether Felrenden is the name of their king, their realm, or just the gnome trading band that, save in the depths of winter, comes into Leilon about once a month.

Ardabad, Braeder, and Pheldaer were all heroes of the Ieirithyn gnomes in their days, but the formerly energetic and aggressive gnome presence in the Sword Mountains has declined to what one village elder called "a shameful, sleepy shadow." Despite the rich Felrenden iron and copper lodes, and a huge seam of coal near the Pit, it's likely that this mining village (that can today muster, at most, some 400 adult gnomes) might long ago have vanished altogether under the fangs and blades of passing predators or rival miners had it not been for its "Unseen Protector."

Few folk except the savage Forgebar dwarves (a 60- or 70-strong family of aggressive and well-armed hill dwarves who are swift to slay those who disagree with them, and dwell in caves cut into the slopes of Mount Galardrym, a little more than ten miles east of Felrenden) know or suspect that the Unseen Protector of Ieirithymbul is a dragon. Most minstrels and sages believe it's a local guardian spirit. Some cleave to the alternative view that the Protector is the invisible "send-forth" of a gnome wizard who's learned how to travel out of his body in a flying, ghostlike form that can hear, see, speak, and cast spells. All of them ridicule any suggestion that the invisible spellcaster that routs anyone foolish enough to attack Ieirithymbul openly has anything to do with dragons.

The Forgebar dwarves know better. Thrice their attacks on Ieirithymbul have led to the near-extermination of the dwarves involved, under the spells and rending claws of a fierce gold dragon whose scales are cracked and pale with age, and who weeps when he must slay—but slays nonetheless, without

ORC RAIDS, the misbehavior of visiting adventurers, and monster maraudings along the Coast Road near Leilon make Palarandusk act.

hesitation or mercy. Volo recorded this as a clever disguise or magical image assumed by a spellcaster desiring to keep foes at a distance, but Elminster confirmed Palarandusk's true nature.

Palarandusk spends almost all of his time these days as a soundlessly levitating, semisolid, invisible entity who can watch, listen, speak, and move about, but is unable to cast spells or launch physical attacks in this form. In invisible form, he is AC –10 and vulnerable to all attacks launched by attackers who detect or suspect his presence, just as he is when solid. In like manner, the invisible Palarandusk retains the spells, movement rate, hit points, and strength of his solid form—that of a male gold great wyrm whose eyes are bright and alert, but whose jaws are white with age, and whose scales are pale and cracked from long use and failing vitality.

The Unseen Protector regards the gnomes of his chosen village as his children. He spends most of his time drifting along, watching over them. He's attracted to family quarrels, feasts, and other occasions when the normally taciturn gnomes speak freely and at length about their views, feelings, or aims, but otherwise tends to escort gnomes who are on the borders of Felrenden (sheepherding, gathering edible meadow flowers, prospecting, or mining) or traveling out of the valley to trade. He's swift to act when an Ieirithyn gnome is threatened, but he is wise enough to value eavesdropping on enemy councils above making a show of materializing to strike first at arriving danger, or retaliating swiftly against a foe of the gnomes.

Palarandusk can seem ghostly or spectral, and he can force his way through openings that would obviously bar his passage when in full-bodied form, but he's not amorphous, and every time he "passes through" solid material that would cause more than a scrape or gash him (for 1d4 hp damage, which he suffers in either solid or invisible, "ghostly" form), he loses 4d4 hp, 1 of them permanently. Change between spectral and solid form requires a full round, during which the dragon can do nothing else except move and talk. Becoming solid and visible is necessary if Palarandusk desires to cast any spells except those that only affect himself, and it is impossible for any part of the dragon's "full" body to materialize in space occupied by something solid. When spectral, the dragon can't carry any solid objects save things he has swallowed, which are altered in state along with the rest of the dragon, even if inherently indigestible.

Palarandusk's unique nature leaves him neither desiring nor needing much food; he absorbs moisture (and allows wastes to wash away, as desired) when rains fall or by lying in the icy waters of the Felrenden, and he devours mountain rock, mine tailings, or foes of the Ieirithyn when—a rare thing—hunger seizes him.

Orc raids, the misbehavior of visiting adventurers, and monster maraudings along the Coast Road near Leilon make Palarandusk act. Although he primarily defends the Felrenden, he does watch over Ieirithyn trading-parties on their way to Leilon or trademoots along The High Road.

The Unseen Protector is wary of adventurers hunting rare dragon trophies or unusual body remnants that can be sold to mages and alchemists, so he is loathe to appear or otherwise reveal his presence unless he deems it necessary. A few wizards know of his existence and have come to Ieirithymbul to trade spells. Unless they bring magics that can make him live on in strength and power, however, Palarandusk is uninterested in long discussions. One mage from Neverwinter did provide him with a spell that successfully drained an enchanted rod to empower Palarandusk's activities, but the dragon completely drained the item long ago; unless visitors bring him fresh magical rods of particular sorts, he can make no further use of that magic.

Palarandusk never wastes time arguing with or warning intruders; he lurks and watches until action is necessary—

and then materializes and strikes. The Unseen Protector wields spells far beyond the norm for ancient gold dragons and is seldom seen by humans, few of whom will readily discern (or believe) what he has become.

A truly ancient gold he-dragon (mature when Netheril was young), Palarandusk has prolonged his existence beyond the natural death and decay of his body through powerful magics of his own devising. Now the spells that maintain his magically-knit form are failing, and he dares materialize for only a few minutes each day—usually showing himself for only a few seconds, to proffer something, snatch something, or attack.

The rest of the time, Palarandusk exists as an invisible entity whose "attacks" against any victim cause a nauseous, constricted feeling but cause no actual harm—except to the Protector himself, who suffers the same damage as for other contacts with solid obstacles. In his invisible, semisolid form, Palarandusk does not age, the spells that keep him whole do not deteriorate, and he suffers no harm from the elements.

In solid form, Palarandusk has all the powers and properties of a gold great wyrm, save that his wizard spell roster is akin to that of a 28th-level wizard; he has access to six spells of each level, from first through ninth. He employs many spells forgotten today (learned mainly from the tomes of mages who died in the fall of Netheril and the years of strife and confusion that followed). Palarandusk chafes in his "shadow existence," and dreams of becoming a widely respected power in the Sword Coast North once more.

The Sun Dragon

Palarandusk is first mentioned in a nameless, fragmentary book whose pages are burnished sheets of electrum stamped with characters unintelligible to the sages of today without benefits of magic to divine their meanings. In the days before Netheril was founded, he dwelt somewhere along the Sword Coast and hunted such prey as wyverns from what is now Luskan to where Waterdeep was later founded.

Enslaved—or forced into servitude to avoid a worse fate—by the sorcerer Mileirigath in the early days of Netheril, Palarandusk spent centuries toiling in obedient obscurity, his longevity and eventually his nature and abilities altered by many enchantments cast on him by his master and Mileirigath's apprentices. When that realm of increasingly decadent splendor fell, he seized what magic (spellbooks in particular) he could from the ruins and the clutches of plundering illithids and other fell foes, and set about using his augmented magical abilities in freedom for the first time.

Palarandusk has also collected philosophical human writings and has spoken with a few elves and dwarves about their own views of the world, with the aim of forming a personal code. He has collected some monetary treasures, which he hid in several high, remote mountain caves and rifts for his own later use. Sleeping on a bed of treasure and continuously coveting more wealth has no allure for Palarandusk, but he does enjoy beauty, such as that captured in the occasional statue or even painting, which might be found propped up in clefts and beneath sheltered overhangs here and there around the Felrenden today. He sees the value of coinage as rare and precious things for bargaining with humans, elves, and dwarves, or even purchasing magic or aid outright.

Palarandusk lives by his own laws, which he alters rarely, and then only after much internal debate and reflection. He believes that any dragon has a duty to live in harmony with the land, devouring prey only as needful, despoiling things only when ruination can't be avoided, and protecting its domain against damage from such things as floods, fires, and invasions. In Neverwinter, the exploits of Palarandusk (under the name of the "Sun Dragon") are legendary; he protected the city several times from orc hordes and invasions from the northern Moonshaes, and he was seen as the benevolent protector of the city a heroic icon to whom some humans even prayed.

The passing years robbed the Sun Dragon of his strength and suppleness, and young dragons arrived to challenge him for his domain with the frequency of vultures circling a stricken beast. With no fitting, trusted successor as defender of Neverwinter in sight, Palarandusk dared not stand his ground and go down fighting, for that proud gesture would leave his chosen home undefended. He had to hide and devote his time to learning magic enough to survive—and learning it fast.

Wherefore the Sun Dragon was seen less and less in Neverwinter. He had already slipped into legend by the time

the Arcane Brotherhood arose in Luskan, and fear of their recognizing his magical nature and using spells to enslave him drove Palarandusk to "disappear."

Adopting human form, Palarandusk used some of his treasure to purchase a half-ruined mansion in the countryside not far south and east of Neverwinter, shut himself up in it, and set to work learning all the wizard spells he could. He was still there, decades later, when a band of adventurers who were either extremely fortunate in their choice of spells, or who'd been sent to destroy him by someone who knew his true nature, blasted the house to flaming embers around his ears. The attack came without warning, and it destroyed almost all of the aging gold dragon's spellbooks. Palarandusk escaped destruction by frantic use of his spells—but not before his body had been so ravaged by magic that it was only held together by a webwork of shattered enchantments. Whelming all of his magic to save himself, the Sun Dragon rebuilt his own frame, forming the substanceless body of the slowly crumbling Unseen Protector he is today.

Palarandusk then decided that his lessened abilities made him unfit for his self-assigned post of defender of Neverwinter. The city in which he was now more of a shining legend than a memory now boasted half a dozen wizards of accomplishment and several resident bands of adventurers; it had decidedly less need for a draconic protector. Yet the gold wyrm was a restless wanderer as he toured much of the Sword Coast North, finding old friends and foes gone, and the land much changed from the untouched wilderlands of his youth.

At length Palarandusk decided his unease was because protecting the folk and the land of some small corner of Faerûn was now part of his nature; he could not be content except as a guardian. His sense of whimsy and gentle good nature grew with this realization, as he searched for a new "small corner" to call his own.

He wanted to live somewhere close to a center of vibrant activity, yet in a locale remote and unknown. He wanted to protect essentially honest folk given more to hard work and living with the land than, say, perfecting sorcery and dreaming of ruling other places. Human mages were out, and the gnomes of Ieirithymbul—almost unknown and yet relatively close to bustling Waterdeep—were in. Palarandusk used magic to draw several gnome elders out on their own, one after another, to reveal himself to them, offering to defend them if they'd accept his presence. One by one, awed and touched, they agreed, and the long career of the Unseen Protector of Ieirithymbul began.

Down the years since, the body of the aging gold dragon has continued to deteriorate, despite several magical augmentations Palarandusk purchased or traded other spells for. He destroyed one orc horde before it could properly form, frustrating the plans of the cunning orc chieftain Rauragh, whose prize scheme was to bring orc bands through the subterranean ways of the Underdark to assemble in the Sword Mountains, and from there swoop down on Waterdeep, moving by night until the walls could be stormed by surprise. He has also slain several human wizards (including Radiglar "the Wormtamer" of the Cult of the Dragon) and shattered an adventuring band, Koroaver's Raiders, who sought to establish a mining stronghold that could ally itself with the Zhentarim, and give the Dark Network a defensible trading base on the doorstep of Waterdeep.

Already an expert in the flows and consequences of magic, able to predict with fair accuracy the result of two or even more spells clashing on the same target or in the same space, the Unseen Protector has recently learned a surprising amount about current trade alliances and practices along The High Road, whilst lurking undetected in Leilon or on the route the gnomes use between there and Felrenden. He's always alert for news of doings elsewhere in the North that might warn him of orc hordes, displaced war survivors, or migrating monsters possibly soon to be seen in the Sword Mountains.

Palarandusk spends his days in diligent guardianship, contemplating ways in which his body can be magically strengthened. He avoids other dragons whenever possible, and the noted draconic expert Velsaert of Baldur's Gate is unaware of Palarandusk, although he has recorded several "unconfirmed rumors with a shared subject: invisible wyrm melting into visibility and attacking" in the vicinity of Leilon.

The key to Palarandusk's character is his light humor and thorough and sympathetic understanding of human nature, operating through a firm personal code. If paladins learned about him, they could learn much from him. He defends the Ieirithyn gnomes like a bold and benevolent grandfather,

never thinking of his own safety, never employing traps or ruses, and never sleeping. In fact, he has no need to sleep, though Elminster believes that the hastening deterioration of the dragon's body is directly related to Palarandusk's ceaseless activity; other wyrms of advanced age seem to spend almost all of their time asleep.

Palarandusk's Lair

The Unseen Protector has no true lair. He keeps things of beauty in several remote clefts and overhangs (for their own protection against the elements, not security) around and about Felrenden, and has treasure stashed (usually under boulders he placed there) in various rock clefts in the Sword Mountains and in the southernmost Crags, north of Neverwinter. He has no need of personal warmth or shelter and finds the idea of prepared traps abhorrent. Snatching up mountainside boulders to hurl down at a foe during battle is fine, because there's no premeditation in such deeds unless the boulders have been deliberately collected and placed there, beforehand.

Palarandusk's Domain

The Unseen Protector rarely leaves Felrenden and a narrow strip of territory linking it to Leilon along The High Road but considers that he has every right to go where he chooses, given the urge or necessity. Other dragons may have their domains and defend them fiercely, but he was here before them all, and (he thinks) will probably outlive most of them. He has no desire to offend a wyrm whose domain he's traversing, but if attacked, he'll defend himself—and unless the dragon is of good alignment (and thus, merely misguided), the Protector will seek to slay or maim his attacker. Over-aggressive wyrms give all dragons a bad name, endangering all dragonkind ... and so should be eliminated.

The Deeds of Palarandusk

Palarandusk spends a typical day drifting from one gnome to another like an anxious but silent invisible sheepdog, trying to maintain an overall, ongoing picture of the whereabout and doings of all the Ieirithyn gnomes. At the same time, he tries to watch out for creatures of all sorts approaching the Felrenden. Given the prevalence of mages able to magically transform themselves these days, even lone birds can't be ignored.

Palarandusk is not known to have ever mated (though his early days are a mystery to historians and might well have included pairings), and he isn't known to particularly welcome the presence or friendship of other dragons. He worked amicably with other wyrms while in service, in Netheril, but seems never to have sought out other wyrms. A true and contented loner, the Unseen Protector maintains no current alliances.

Palarandusk's Magic

Elminster was able to glean details of only one of the Unseen Protector's spells—a battle magic that Palarandusk uses sparingly, deeming it 'unfair' to employ against a single foe, but useful in defending gnomes from one foe whilst he's occupied with others.

Whipstrike

(Evocation)
Level: 3
Range: 30 yards
Components: V
Duration: 1 round
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One being
Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates a whirlwind of solid air, akin to certain of the magics that hold Palarandusk together. It forms above a chosen target and stabs down in a single, unerring strike, hammering the victim for 4d4 hp damage and forcing all fragile worn or carried items, such as clay or glass materials, to make saving throws vs. crushing blow.

A target creature who collapses under the strike, falling flat and limp rather than standing against it, is allowed a save vs. spell for half damage—but successful or not, they are held down, unable to move or make any deliberate act, for one round.

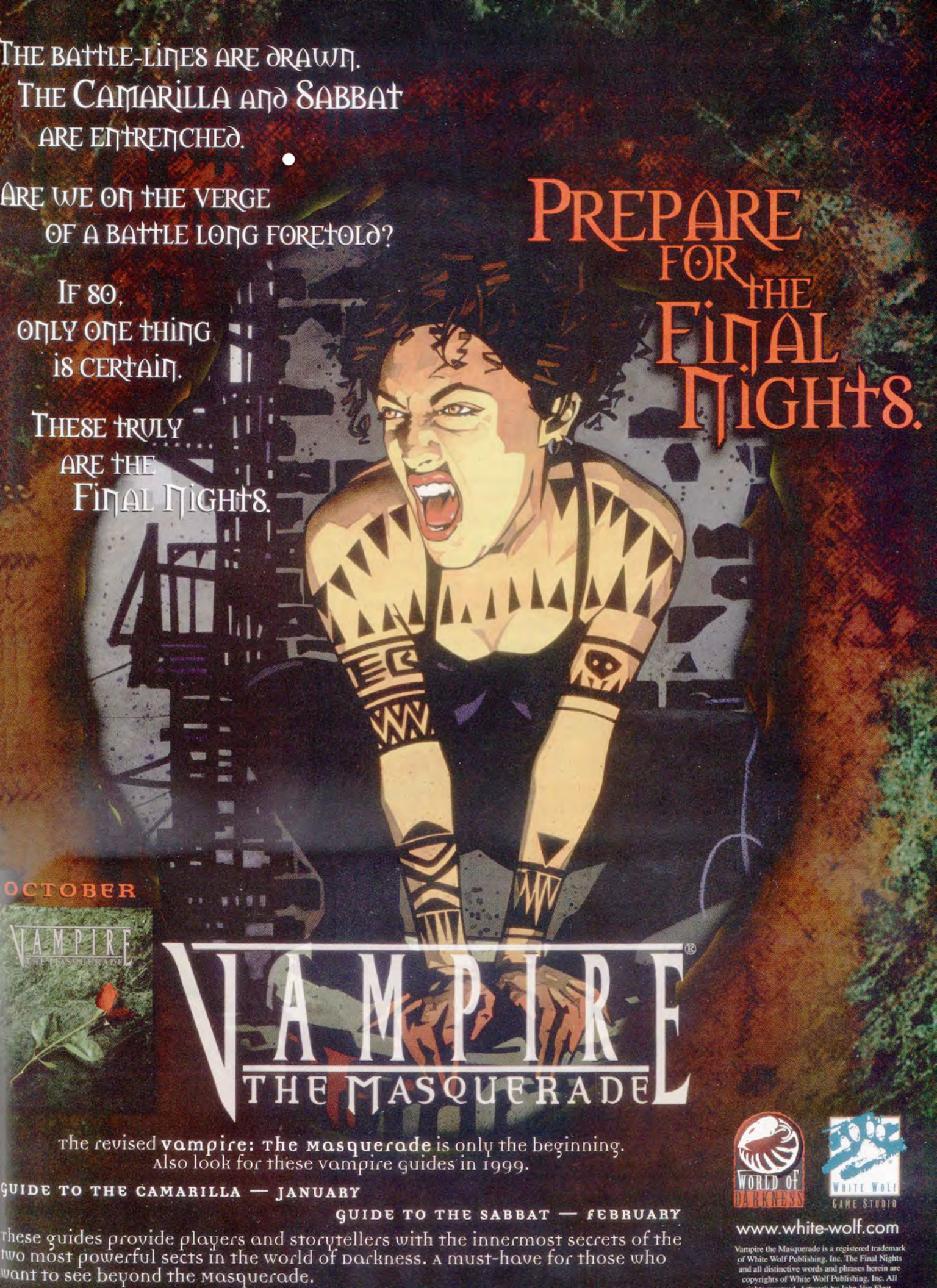
Creatures who fall from a height or out of the air (from flight or levitation) under the effects of (or seeking to avoid) a *whipstrike* suffer falling damage. If a creature can move out of range between commencement of casting and the actual strike (such a creature would have to be at the limits of spell range), the strike is avoided and the spell is wasted.

A *whipstrike* appears as a roiling or out-of-focus area of empty air.

Palarandusk's Fate

Although the Unseen Protector could well be overwhelmed if the Felrenden ever became vitally important to the Arcane Brotherhood, another cabal of evil mages, or any alliance of three or more dragons, it seems more likely he'll soldier on in obscurity for several more centuries before his body finally falls apart. Whether his enchantments will enable him to continue on as a disembodied sentience or not is unknown—but Elminster warns that, if it does, the Protector (deprived of any means of defending anything, and fated only to watch) could well go insane and might then pose either a menace to all ... or be merely a powerless, unseen shadow.

Ed Greenwood claims that he can, and often does, speak to folk who don't have silver hair, magic swords, and spells up their sleeves that can sear—or remake—worlds. He just prefers his more memorable tavern encounters all over the Realms to what generally confronts him in the here-and-now.



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Jack-o-Lanterns

These peculiar lamps have power to ward away the undead or to terrify the living.

YOHN PULLED SOMETHING FROM HIS BACKPACK. It was a large, orange object that looked for all the world like a pumpkin in the subtle moonlight. Without a word to the rest of the party, the wizard balanced the object atop a gravestone and pulled off its top. He dug into his pack, and a moment later there was a flash of flint and stone. Sparks lit the wick of a stout candle; it flared briefly before settling into a yellow flame. Yohn picked up the candle gingerly and placed it inside the pumpkin—yes, that's definitely what it was, a pumpkin with its top cut off and its inside hollowed out—where it illuminated a sharply carved face: two angular eyes, a triangle for a nose, and a toothy grin that was half jolly and half malevolent, glowing fervent orange in the night.

Yohn topped the pumpkin, then scooped up the unusual lantern. "Very well," he said, giving a telling glance to his fellow party members. "We'll see if we can't get past those zombies and out of this cemetery!"

by
Brian P. Hudson

illustrated by
Jim Crabtree

Traditional jack-o-lanterns are gourds or squashes (often pumpkins) hollowed out and carved with frowning or grinning face, then lit from within by a candle. They are traditional talismans and good luck pieces used outside homes and at harvest festivals to scare away the spirits that were once believed to roam about during the approach of winter, a time when folk believed that the barrier separating the worlds of the quick and the dead are at their weakest, and things oftentimes "slipped through" to prowl the land of the living.

Magical Jack-o-Lanterns

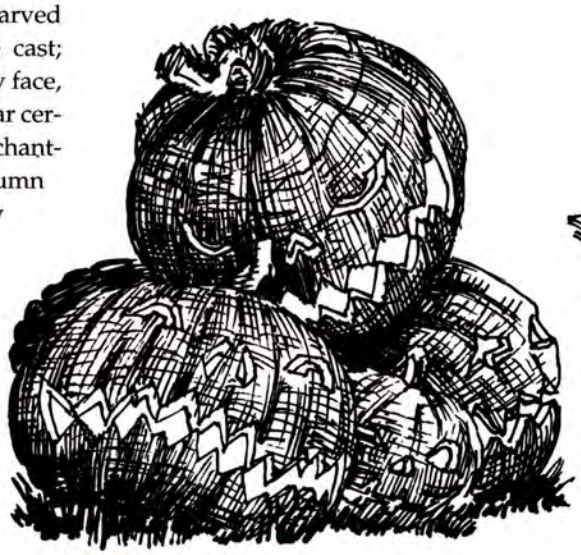
In the AD&D® game, with its towns full of farmers, peasants, and medieval flair, the jack-o-lantern does exist—but with a twist. Magical jack-o-lanterns are gourds or squashes carved out and imbued with magical power that can protect a village and ward off the undead. Jack-o-lanterns are a "folk magic," a kind of magic practiced by village magicians and hedge wizards, and oftentimes shunned by "true" students of wizardry. This is a shame, for a jack-o-lantern can be a potent force against the dead as well as the living. Several groups of intrepid adventurers have even taken to carrying these strange lanterns and find them useful at times, despite their rather fragile natures—a jack-o-lantern can withstand only 1d6 + 1 hp damage before being crushed, and a typical jack-o-lantern begins to rot within two weeks without some sort of preservation, losing 1 hp per day and becoming powerless when 1d6 + 1 hp damage have been sustained. Some wizards have managed to dry and preserve lanterns for year-round use through either natural or magical means; such lanterns can withstand up to 12 hp damage and do not rot.

Jack-o-lanterns begin as ripe pumpkins or squashes, which must be carved out before the enchantments are cast; any lantern can be carved with any face, though specific lanterns tend to bear certain features. Next, the proper enchantments are cast, and handful of autumn leaves—colored but not completely dry—are burned inside the lantern, while the final spells are cast; when this is done, and the leaves have become ashes, the jack-o-lantern is complete and ready for use.

For a lantern's power to take effect, the jack-o-lantern must be lit from within; an unlit lantern is powerless and radiates only a faint glimmer of magic. Traditionally, candles are used to light jack-o-lanterns, and any kind of candle works so long as the flame is completely inside the lantern, not sticking out the top. Once lit, the candle is protected by the lantern itself and cannot be extinguished with a simple breath; water, or a candle cap, is necessary to extinguish the flame. It is uncertain whether a magical light source, such as a stone affected by a *light* spell, can reliably trigger a lantern's power; most village wizards agree, however, that part of the power is within the flickering light of the flame, and it was for this reason that *lantern tallows* were created.

A lighted jack-o-lantern's effects are continuing—that is, moving from the aura of one lantern to another of the same type, once under the effects of the lantern, continues the effect without a saving throw. Hence, one could line the perimeter of a house with several lanterns of the same type to create a solid wall of enchantment. Overlapping auras do not affect each other, except in the case of *fright lanterns* or *wailing lanterns*; the powers of a *jovial lantern* counters each of these.

Below are several of the more common jack-o-lanterns, though occasionally variations—even completely unique lanterns—are encountered. The costs listed for the lanterns range from half to triple the listed price, as costs vary from town to town and wizard to wizard.



Jack-o-Lantern

Carved in any one of a number of faces, this is the classic *jack-o-lantern* of folklore: a ward against evil spirits wandering the night. The *jack-o-lantern*, while lit, projects a magical aura that acts as a *protection from evil* spell on everything in a 30' radius, with no saving throw. In addition, lighting such a lantern acts as a ward against the undead; all mindless undead (skeletons, zombies, and the like) refuse to step inside the aura, and those within the area of effect are forced to leave as if turned, retreating to the edges of the 30' radius and unable to step inside. Free-willed undead can enter the aura but must save against the ward before stepping inside or else suffer a –2 penalty to all abilities, saves, and attack rolls while within the lantern's area of effect.

This lantern is popular with both townsfolk and adventurers. It is found abundantly throughout rural towns and farming villages at harvest time. It is rumored that some necromancers have created similar magical lanterns with the power to protect from good and the ability to attract wandering undead. Such rumors are unconfirmed, however, and no village wizard knows how to craft such an item, nor would they attempt to if compelled.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 2,500

Jovial Lantern

As with any kind of magic, there have been inevitable modifications of the original *jack-o-lantern*, and the *jovial lantern* is both the most common and the easiest to craft. Usually carved with smiling, happy faces, the *jovial lantern* emits a completely benign aura of cheer and merriment when lit, a form of *charm* spell that is subject to the same saving throw as *charm person* for anyone within 30 feet wishing to resist it. Those under the effect of the *charm* lose any immediate desire to fight and become

happy, quick to smile and laugh or even dance and sing if there's music playing. Affected demihumans receive a +1 Charisma bonus (reflecting their pleasant nature), and any creature affected by a *fear* spell finds it dispelled immediately. (This does not apply to dragon fear.) The effects last for as long as one is within the lantern's aura and for three rounds after they move out of the area of effect.

This lantern is popular with village wizards and is often found sitting beside classic *jack-o-lanterns* at harvest festivals.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 2,500

Bursting Lantern

This lantern wears a comical expression of surprise, something those who fall afoul of it quickly understand. The *bursting lantern* is essentially a magical land mine employed by lighting the candle its and running away as quickly as possible. One round after the *bursting lantern* is lit, it "sets" itself for as long as it burns. Once set, it explodes whenever a living creature of size S or larger comes within five feet. The lantern uses a form of the *pyrotechnics* spell to create a small *fireball* from its candle flame; this *fireball* causes 3d6 hp damage to anything within a 10' radius. A saving throw vs. spells is allowed to halve the damage. The only way to stop the explosion is to extinguish the flame; to do so without triggering the lantern requires a magical wind or an expertly aimed bucket of water.

Obviously, this nasty little surprise is a one-use item, and as such they are usually made in pairs or groups.

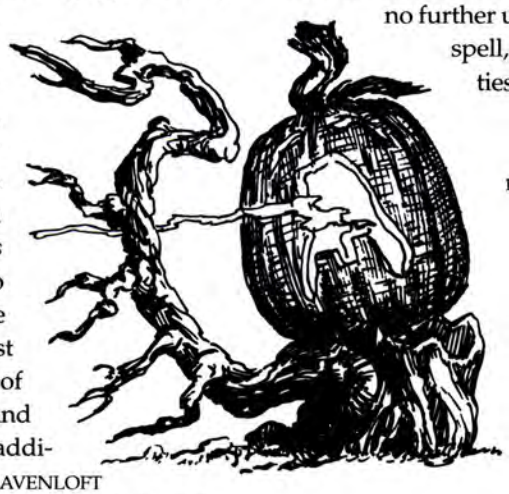
XP Value: 750 **GP Value:** 1,000

Fright Lanterns

Carved as wicked-looking faces with devilish grins, the lighted *fright lantern* creates an aura of *fear* affecting any creature within sight of its glowing face. The effect acts as the wizard spell of the same name, cast at the 8th level of ability, and is effective even on demi-humans, whose immunities to magic or *charm* are halved against the fright lantern's power. Once the fear has gripped them, even those who save successfully fight the impending fear, saving once again for every three rounds they remain within the *fright lantern's* glow. Those who fail must leave the area and won't rest until they are out of sight of the lantern and its wicked grin. In addition, PCs in the RAVENLOFT setting must make a fear check or be haunted by the face for the next month, resting uneasily and requiring two extra hours of sleep or study for healing and spell memorization. This effect is in lieu of a typical fear result.

This lantern is not often made by village wizards, except in cases of extreme need—against bandits or lycanthropes, for example, where traditional lanterns would be less effective. They rarely agree to make them for outsiders or strangers, including groups of unfamiliar PCs.

XP Value: 1,500 **GP Value:** 3,000



Wailing Lanterns

Crafted first by a dark wizard in the RAVENLOFT domain of Hazlan, this jack-o-lantern, sometimes called the glowing banshee, wears a dreary frown on its face. When lit, it begins to cry softly but noticeably in the tones of a man suffering anguish and despair. All creatures hearing this weeping are immediately struck with a feeling of unease, requiring a saving throw vs. spell. Those who succeed suffer no effect, though the lantern's sobs can still be heard. Those who fail, however, feel their unease begin to grow, even as the sobs of the lantern become progressively louder. After five rounds, the sobs become cries, and affected creatures become downcast and agitated even as they find their attention distracted by the lantern's lament; they perform tasks with little determination, fight with less vigor, and suffer a –1 penalty on attack rolls and proficiency checks.

At this point, a second saving throw is made. Success means the creature falls no further under the lantern's spell, though the penalties remain until he is out of range of the wailing. Failure means the affected creatures sink further into depression—they become despondent, muttering about the futility of whatever it is they have set out to do, and suffer a –2 penalty on attack rolls and proficiency checks.

Within one turn of first hearing the lantern's sobs, creatures who have failed both saving throws hear the cries as a bemoaning wail that dampens all other sound and grips their thoughts. They become openly fatalistic, noting the uselessness of the task at hand and refusing to fight unless forced, then suffering a –3 penalty to attack rolls and proficiency checks.

It takes a full hour once outside of the *wailing lantern's* area of effect for victims

to come to their senses, losing the –3 penalty and finally driving the echoes of the wailing lantern from their ears.

In RAVENLOFT, the power of the lantern increases. Any PC forced to make a fear or horror check while under the spell of a *wailing lantern* must also make an immediate madness check, with failure indicating that the character has moved into a state of paranoia (see the *Domains of Dread* tome for rules on fear, horror, and madness). Obviously, none but the most evil of wizards will ever craft this lantern, and anyone (PC or NPC) not of evil alignment who attempts to create one should be subject to a potential alignment shift and a RAVENLOFT powers check.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 4,500

Talking Lanterns

These unusual jack-o-lanterns are usually found in tandem with some other kind of lantern—most often *fright lanterns* or *jovial lanterns*—thought they sometimes appear with no other attributes. When lit, the *talking lantern* can be imbued with a phrase or message by speaking a given command word (such as "repeat" or "remember") and then speaking the message. The lantern then repeats the message to any sentient creature coming within 30 feet of its face. The message is delivered once when it is triggered and is then repeated every other round until the creature leaves the area. The lantern's mouth moves in tandem with the words, and the voice is a hollow imitation of the voice that delivered the original message.

Talking lanterns can be combined with the powers of other lanterns. When combined with the attributes of a *fright lantern* or *jovial lantern*, all affected creatures suffer a –2 to saving throws against the lantern's power. This is due mainly to the visual—a talking *fright lantern* can be most effective as it warns PCs to stay away even as its *fear* takes hold, and a singing *jovial lantern* at a harvest party is a silly sight, indeed.

XP Value: 2,000 (alone), 2,500 (*fright* or *jovial*)
GP Value: 6,000

Lantern Tallow

A special, magically enchanted candle designed for burning inside jack-o-lanterns, the *lantern tallow* is a stout candle that burns slowly once lit, spending itself much more slowly than a normal candle. The tallow found in many lanterns burns for a week before being spent, and the best hedge wizards have crafted tallows that burn for a month or more. The tallows have become popular with adventurers, as they burn just as well with or without a lantern to illuminate, although alone they illuminate only an area of 5' radius.

XP Value: 150 **GP Value:** 200

Brian P. Hudson is a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Central Michigan University, as well as a DM for an unlucky band of adventurers in the RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting. He is an occasional contributor to DRAGON® Magazine.

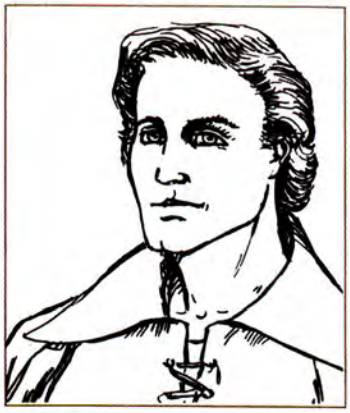
Nodwick
SOMETHING'S NOT KOSHER ABOUT THIS HALLWAY.
YES. MY MAGIC INDICATES A SUBTLE BUT DEADLY TRAP!
WE REALLY NEED A THIEF.
OUR LAST ONE IS STILL IN THERAPY.
THERE'S ONLY ONE SOLUTION...
TOSS THE HENCHMAN INTO IT!
GOD, I LOVE TEMPS! THEY'RE SO VERSITILE!
NODWICK! C'MERE! THERE'S... UH, A REALLY COOL ROCK UP HERE YOU SHOULD SEE!

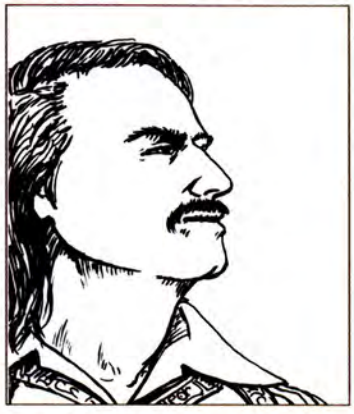
PC Portraits

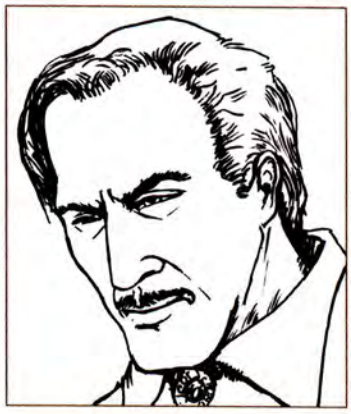
HAUNTED HEROES

by George Vrbanic

"What could bring a person to walk in those dark places where ghosts might dwell?" asks George Vrbanic. "Is it arrogance or curiosity? Is it quiet devotion or fanatical zeal? Whatever brings them to those haunted places, they can never leave them unchanged."







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Tomes of Forbidden Lore

Filled with dark knowledge and forbidden magics, spellbooks found in the Demiplane of Dread are best left alone.

by
Matthew L. Martin

illustrated by
L.A. Williams

MAGIC IN THE LAND OF MISTS IS A RARE AND MYSTERIOUS art. Most mages study on their own, drawing their knowledge from the occasional mentor and from dusty old books of magic. To preserve their learning, many wizards continue the tradition of setting their discoveries and researches down in writing. Priests, too, often commit new rituals and teachings to paper so they can be kept for future generations.

Thus are the spellbooks of the RAVENLOFT® campaign created. These dark tomes often differ from their counterparts in other worlds. The insidious lore within them permeates their pages, making such books magical items as well as repositories of arcane lore. The enchantments on these books are often foul and dangerous, just like the knowledge they hold. Few virtuous mages survive long enough to develop new spells in the Demiplane of Dread, and dark sorcery is more easily researched in this land than light.

Books of magic in the RAVENLOFT setting bear as much resemblance to the vile librams of H.P. Lovecraft's stories as they do to a spellbook in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. The spells and knowledge contained within should be dangerous to a PC spellcaster, and the book itself should display unsettling quirks. These books often work better as campaign drivers or NPC items than as traditional spellbooks. PCs might need to recover the *Book of the Requiem* before the minions of Death find it, or they might encounter a cult based on the ideas described within *The Revelations of the Prince of Twilight*. Heroic wizards and priests studying these books risk their minds and souls.

Three spellbooks of the Demiplane are described below: a text created by a now-vanished darklord for his last and darkest scheme, a collection of spells to warp the mind, and a religious text that has lured numerous souls to a fate worse than death. These are only a sampling of the tomes found in RAVENLOFT, and they can easily be used as models for other collections of unholy lore.

Book of the Requiem

Appearance: The *Book* is a massive tome, 2' long, 16" wide, and 4" thick. The binding is crafted of the finest gold and embossed with elegant but disturbing shapes, dominated by hourglasses, skulls, daggers, and scythes. Some say that the skulls have the texture of bone instead of gold, and holders of the tome have reported cutting themselves on the weapons. The Fiery Eye that served as

Azalin's symbol appears on the front cover, inlaid in rubies. Unlike most spellbooks or collections of secret knowledge, there is no lock or clasp on the cover. The *Book* feels uncomfortably cold when the Fiery Eye is dark, but it turns quite hot when it holds absorbed life energy.

The *Book* is written in the language of Darkon, but the spells therein can be understood and used by any wizard. The paper of the tome is bone white, while the words are a deep black. According to those who have glimpsed the book, the letters appear to have been burnt on to the page. No illuminations, borders, or illustrations break up the somber writing, although the section on the *infernal machine* (see below) is filled with arcane formulae and diagrams. Using a *detect magic* spell on the *Book* reveals an extremely powerful aura of necromancy and enchantment.

The *Book's* enchantments make it impervious to normal methods of destruction, although magical fire, lightning, or disintegration attacks can damage or destroy it. The *Book* saves as paper with a +3 bonus against such attacks—with one exception, described in the Contents section.

History: The Grim Harvest, Azalin's final and most foul scheme, was also his most elaborate and widespread plan. While many steps were carried out under the lich lord's direct supervision, Azalin recognized that if he were to provide all the guidance in person, or even through his few trusted emissaries, the Grim Harvest might take decades to complete. While patience is perhaps a lich's only virtue, Azalin hated the thought of delaying his escape from the Demiplane of Dread.

To help his distant servants complete their portion of the Grim Harvest, Azalin and his most powerful aides created the *Book of the Requiem*, a collection of arcane lore that provided all the information necessary to prepare and execute this horrid plan. The *Book* was then circulated among the various temples of the Eternal Order, as collections of priests, Kargat agents, and Ebon Fold assassins made use of the dark knowledge contained in it to execute their master's unholy scheme. Some suggest that several copies were in fact made, but the vast amount of magic contained in the *Book* makes that unlikely. The *Book* was used in Nartok to perfect the *infernal machine* there before Death's Ascension; it was later sighted in Il Aluk just before the Darkest Night, the activation of the doomsday device, and the resulting events in Darkon. The book's fate in the wake of that tragedy is unknown, although a group of heroes who escaped Il Aluk just after the Requiem report seeing a cloaked figure escaping with a massive book that was bound in black metal and bore an eye that had a skull in place of its pupil. The Unholy Order of the Grave now seeks the book, as do the remnants of the Ebon Fold, the Church of Eternal Order, and numerous independent necromancers.

Powers and Contents: Like many of the artifacts created in the Grim Harvest, the *Book of the Requiem* steals and stores

life energy. Anyone other than a priest of the Eternal Order, a member of the Kargat, or the Ebon Fold who tries to open the *Book* finds that the tome steals a portion of their life energy. (In game terms, the victim loses one experience level, no saving throw.)

Once this happens, the Fiery Eye on the cover begins glowing brightly. The *Book* holds only one level at a time, though; for the trap to be reset, the energy must be decanted into a *crystal skull* (see below) or another vessel designed to hold life energy.

Beyond that trap, the *Book* opens with a short letter from King Azalin describing the immediate objective of the Grim Harvest, exhorting the reader to "collect life energy from the unfit, the unworthy, and the dangerous, to further our own advancement and thus the enhancement of our ability to reward our loyal servants." Those who do not participate in the Grim Harvest, according to Azalin, "will find themselves suffering greatly, just as those who do not prepare for the winter freeze to death—through no fault of our own, but through the merciless laws of nature."

Following the preface comes what many who have sought the *Book of the Requiem* consider its greatest treasure: a collection of spells designed to help capture life energy for the Grim Harvest. The book contains *magic mouth, vampiric touch, contagion, enchanted weapon, enervation, avoidance, enchant an item, blood's call*, life bond*, glassteel,* and *energy drain.* (Spells marked with an asterisk are unique to the tome.) The priest spell *death's tithe** is also described. The *Book* also includes information on creating *death shards* and *crystal skulls* (see the *Grim Harvest* modules for descriptions; if these modules are unavailable, treat the *death shards* as *daggers of life stealing* and the *crystal skulls* as objects that store life energy and are protected by *magic mouth* warnings and *avoidance, contagion,* and *glassteel* spells), but the crafting of those items requires the blood of a Kargat vampire, making the information useless to most adventurers.

The *Book's* third section contains what strikes most readers as a collection of strange equations, unsettling diagrams, and incoherent writing on the combination of positive biological and magical energies and the enhancement of physical, intellectual, and magical capacity through the infusion of such energies. Intelligent individuals with a grasp of magic (any wizard or priest with an Intelligence score of at least 13) understand the material as guidelines for creating an *infernal machine,* an unholy item that transforms a mortal victim into a quasi-undead creature of enormous power. (See *Death Ascendant* for an example.) Deducing this is difficult for good characters, though, who find that they can't concentrate on this part of the *Book* for more than an hour before the letters begin to lose focus and start moving around on the page. Construction of such a machine requires the presence of a 9th-level necromancer or an 11th-level wizard with access to the school, as well as sufficient supplies of life energy. Since the creation of an *infernal machine* is considered an Act of Ultimate Darkness, and as gathering the life energy needed to power it is likely to require many Dark Powers checks, most heroes will not attempt to create such an item. However, the *Book* provides enough information to allow someone who grasps the concepts (as described above) to understand the purpose and general structure of a machine, and the attacks needed to destroy it.

The *Book's* fourth section is the most curious of all—a sheaf of blank pages. While the rest of the *Book* merely resists damage, this section is impervious to anything. No flame so much as darkens it, and no ink can stain it. Rumors among the Kargat suggest that this section of the *Book* was designed to communicate a message from Azalin in the wake of the Requiem and that it now describes the darklord's true fate. No mortal is known to have seen the *Book* since that event.

Wizard Spells

Blood's Call

(Necromancy, Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 7
Range: 1 mile
Components: M
Duration: 1 hour + 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 1 mile radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

Developed by Antion del Magnio, a Kargat vampire and wizard, this spell allows the use of a living being's blood to establish mental sway over a victim. The spell requires the caster to be holding a vial or container with the blood of one or more sentient beings. When the spell is cast, anyone whose blood is used in the spell and who is within a one-mile radius falls under the sway of the caster. The mage can give one telepathic instruction to all victims, at the time of casting; after that, all commands must be delivered verbally. The victims lose their will completely for the spell's duration; when not ordered by the caster to act, they simply do nothing, staring blankly into space. Any commands to perform self-destructive acts (as defined under the *charm person* spell) allow the victim another save to break the charm. Simply commanding the individual to stand still while some blood or life energy is siphoned off, though, doesn't allow a save until after the first draining, in which case it's often too late. When the spell wears off, the victims retain no memory of what happened while they were *charmed.*

Vampire mages cast this spell with greater potency than mortals. The saving throw penalty of the vampiric caster's *charm* gaze applies to this spell, and the vampire can call all individuals whom he has drunk from over the past three nights.

Casting this spell, and thus tampering with life energy and mortal wills, is grounds for a powers check. Failure should start or continue the caster along the Track of the Vampire (*Domains of Dread,* p. 166). The material components are the blood of the victims and a blood-stained silver bell, which are both consumed when the spell is cast. This spell was used during the Grim Harvest to summon large numbers of victims to a given location; the victims were then drained of life energy at the Kargat's leisure.

Life Bond
(Necromancy)
Level: 7
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: One living being
Saving Throw: None

The *life bond* spell channels life energy to a willing recipient. Life energy suffuses the recipient, making him enormously strong, quick, vital, and appealing. In game terms, the recipient gains +20 hp, +2 to all attack and damage rolls, a +2 bonus to his armor class and saving throws, and an effective Charisma score of 18. These effects persist for 1 day plus 1 day/level of the caster. The caster can, however, sever the bond at any time.

This power is not without a price. Accepting this life energy forms a bond between the victim and the caster. At will, the caster can torment the recipient through the link. This wracks the victim with a terrible, unearthly cold, causing 1d4 hp damage and inflicting a –2 penalty on all actions for one turn. The bond can be reversed, forcing the victim to make a saving throw vs. death. Failure reduces the victim to a withered husk, as all his life energy is drained away. A successful saving throw means that the character only loses one experience level. In either case, the drained levels flow back to the caster, who can either receive the benefits described above (which last for one day per level drained), or decant them into a *crystal skull* or other magical item capable of storing life energy. The only other way to break the bond is to cast *remove curse* and *atonement* spells on the recipient, breaking the spell and removing the stain this spell leaves on the participants' souls.

The spell's components are some of the recipient's blood, a source of life energy (either a living human or demihuman, or a magical item that holds life energy), and a silver chain to connect the two. The source of life energy used from the spell loses a level when the spell is first cast; the silver chain becomes tarnished and brittle when the bond is reversed. The casting of this spell requires a powers check.

Priest Spell

Death's Tithe
(Necromancy)
Sphere: Necromantic
Level: 6
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 service
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 1 cathedral
Saving Throw: Special

Most of the priests of the Eternal Order were charlatans or total incompetents, but there were a few of true power. It was to them that Azalin went for aid during the Grim Harvest. In addition to directing all temples and cathedrals to provide succor, the patriarchs also revealed that they had developed a spell designed to leech life energy from the faithful. It can be cast by any evil priest who learns the spell and has access to the Necromantic sphere.

The *death's tithe* spell should be cast just before a service at the temple it's affecting; if there are no prayers or sacrifices being offered within, the spell fades after a turn. Once it's in effect, it functions as a twisted form of faith magic, drawing life from worshippers. For every one hundred souls present at the service, one level of life energy is collected in a *crystal skull* or another form of life energy container, which serves as the spell's material component. The members of the congregation age one year overnight, due to the strain of having their life energy ripped from them. Active and believing participants in the service receive no saving throw against the drain, while those who are present but don't worship can make a saving throw vs. death. Priests, paladins, and devout adherents to other faiths receive a +4 bonus to their save.

This spell was used very rarely by the Eternal Order. Though the effects are usually subtle, they are noticeable, and the priests feared scaring away their flock. The spell was never used at worship services where children were present for this very reason. In addition, the spell drains the life energy from everyone in the cathedral—the caster and other priests are not immune. However, as the time for the Requiem drew near, several priests used this spell to contribute energy toAzalin's grand scheme.

Tome of the Shackled Mind

Appearance: The *Tome* is a collection of papers loosely bound between two old,

battered gray covers. The paper is new but cheap and dirty, making it difficult to read. Florin deLucier, the author of the book, was believed to have elf blood and wrote the spells in a flowing style reminiscent of elven script. Many of the spells have recently been annotated, with a jerky, jagged hand.

The *Tome* is noteworthy for one other minor detail: It seems impossible to keep it on a shelf or covered up. If laid flat, the book remains where it is, but those who have tried shelving it find that it keeps falling off the shelves and landing flat on a nearby table, desk, or chair. If placed in a stack, it always slips out to be found right next to the stack. In addition, whenever its owner feels strong emotions, a look at the *Tome* reveals that it's been opened to the spell that would seem the most useful for dealing with the problem at hand.

History: The *Tome* is the creation of Florin deLucier, an enchanter from Dementlieu, who spent his time researching new magic or getting caught up in one of the city's numerous webs of intrigue. DeLucier treated the constant scheming as a grand game, using his spells to disrupt the intricate plots and throw the city into even more chaos. Some say that many recent assassination attempts, revolutions, and other outbreaks of confusion can be traced to deLucier's twisted sense of humor and interest in the dark side of human nature.

Unfortunately, deLucier's sense of humor and curiosity was not balanced by a sense of caution, and he eventually came to the attention of the Living Brain after his spells caused one of the Brain's schemes to collapse. The wizard was captured and brought before the Brain one night, as was his extensive library. While the Living Brain battered deLucier with its psychic powers, the Brain's servants searched the wizard's library for anything of use to the Brain's schemes. At last report, deLucier believed himself to be a butterfly caught in a giant web, while the *Tome* had been released to a secret society of wizards—with some alterations made by the Brain through one of its human puppets.

Powers and Contents: The book contains a basic selection of enchantments and some new spells derived from the mage's interest in manipulation and sowing chaos. The book includes *charm person, hypnotism, forget, suggestion, corrupt charm*, dark desires**, and *domination.* All of these spells that require saving throws have had notes on their casting added. These notes describe how to tap the spellcaster's mind to increase his or her power. A wizard who spends a week studying the *Tome's* notes learns how to impose a –2 penalty on the saving throws of victims when he casts these spells. This can only be done three times a day, though, since the mage taps his own latent psionic talent to increase a spell's power.

Using this power also sends out a "psychic signal." Any psionicist within a mile who is searching for psionic activity picks this up if they look for it and can trace it back to the mage. Psionic domain lords, of course, sense it immediately. The most dangerous fact, though, is that the Living Brain can perceive this signal so long as the spellcaster is still in the Core. The Brain can also use one of its spell-like powers on the caster every time this happens. (See the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* Appendices, Vol. 2, for details of the Brain's powers; if that source is unavailable, simply allow the Brain to plant a *suggestion* each time the power is used. The caster gains saving throws against all such mental attacks.)

Wizard Spells

Corrupt Charm

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 4
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One living being
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell was developed by Florin deLucier to counter other enchanters who involve themselves in Dementlieu's intrigues ("spoiling my fun," he once put it) by turning their own spells back at them. The spell also proves effective against normal hypnotic suggestions.

Against an individual of free mind and will, this spell has no effects. If cast on someone under the influence of a *charm, forget,* or *suggestion* spell, the spell begins to warp those other spells.

Charmed individuals, or those under a *suggestion,* become even more slavishly devoted to the spellcaster who cast the spell on them. They do nothing without the caster's express approval, follow the mage or priest everywhere, and think of nothing but the object of their devotion. The victim of the two spells sees the caster of the original *charm* spell as a source of guidance and wisdom. The devotion eventually (after 1d4 days) reaches an obsessive level. The *charmed* individual spends every moment with the charmer and becomes jealous of all other demands on his "master's" attention, doing everything he can to keep others away, ranging from lies to threats of violence to actual murder. The *charm* dissolves at the normal rate, and victims of a *suggestion* are treated as *charmed* for this purpose.

Someone subjected to a *forget* spell (or to memory repression caused by hypnosis or other means) begins remembering that they've forgotten something. After 1d3 days, the memory finally surfaces—but the *corrupt charm* spell has twisted it into something unrecognizable. The character's memory of events are distorted, sinister, and biased heavily against the person who triggered the loss of memory. A mock sword fight would become a brutal murder attempt, while an incident of humiliation would be seen as a terrible psychic trauma engineered by the person who cast the original *forget* spell. Since the recipient honestly believes these events to have happened, *detect lie* and similar forms of magic are useless. A deeper mental probe can reveal the truth of the matter, but it must be done quickly; 1d6 days after the "memory" comes to light, it becomes so hardened into the victim's mind that nothing short of a *wish* spell can pierce the lie.

Casting this spell, with full knowledge of the possible consequences requires a powers check.

Dark Desires

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 5
Range: 1 mile/3 levels
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 day/3 levels
Casting Time: 5 rounds
Area of Effect: One living being
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell opens up the dark lusts of the victim's heart. Upon the time of casting, the subject of the spell merely feels a little warm and dizzy. The spell does not manifest until after the victim sleeps a full night. That night is fraught with fitful and disturbing nightmares. Upon awakening, the victim finds himself passionately desiring a person or object. This object is either one specified by the caster or, by default, one that the character has long desired. The desire won't necessarily be something that the victim had ever given any serious thought to satisfying; lust and greed consume the character so much that he considers any act worth committing. In game terms, the character becomes chaotic evil. The victim won't blindly rush off after this object, but he'll do anything necessary in order to attain it as soon as possible, including actions that would normally be against his beliefs. If the subject of the desire is an object, the character uses it as much as possible once it's obtained. If the subject is a person, then the victim uses any means necessary—gifts, trickery, magic—to win the other's friendship, obedience, or love (depending on the nature of the desire).

When the spell's duration ends, or it is broken by a *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell, the victim's alignment is restored and he often feels guilty about what he did. However, powers checks are not required for acts committed under this spell's influence, although paladins, rangers, and priests are considered to have committed evil acts while under the influence of a spell. The spellcaster, though, must make a powers check for willingly turning someone to evil.

The spell's material component is an onyx or obsidian pendant shaped like a heart and worth at least 500 gp. The pendant shatters when the spell is cast.

The Revelations of the Prince of Twilight

Appearance: *The Revelations of the Prince of Twilight* is a book of 4" × 6" × 2" dimensions. All known copies are bound in fine crimson leather, with a black crown embossed on the front. The inside words are written in stylish calligraphy, with elaborate and brightly colored border illustrations. The illustrations are of angels and cheerful-looking fairies at the front of the book, but as it goes on, they begin to change. The fey retain their beauty but become haughty and cruel in appearance, while the angels likewise reach levels of dark glory and wanton beauty more commonly associated with the most deceptive fiends. If the reader turns back through the book, all of the borders appear to be of the same style as the current section of the book. Once the tome is set down and opened again, the reader once again finds the innocent-looking cherubs and pixies on the first page.

History: Many and varied are the dark cults that have plagued the Land of the Mists. *The Revelations* has given rise to many such groups since it was written five decades ago.

In the introduction to the book, the author gives his name as Renthon Vorishtok, a former monk of a Borcan order, writing in the year 702. No current Borcan monasteries list such a name in the rolls from that time, but few monasteries of that era still survive, leaving the question of Renthon's credibility unanswered.

Renthon claims that he was gifted with priestly powers of extraordinary levels, healing plagues and curing madmen when he was only an initiate. "Sadly," he writes, "as my fame and power grew, my brethren refused to recognize my greatness and failed to grant me the position that was mine by right. In time, their blindness grew, until they considered me not a saint and visionary, but a heretic and blasphemer." Renthon was cast out of his monastery four years after he was initiated and took to wandering the Dark Domains.

"One night near the darkest times of the year, in the cold mountains of Lamordia, where I nearly froze to death, the Prince of Twilight came to me. Saving me from the elements, he revealed to me many secrets of our lands. I came to learn that we had been separated from half of what we were meant to be. Through the proper rites and sacrifices, we can call our 'other halves' from the void in which they dwell—and once that is done, we gain the power to reshape all things—people, objects, the very land itself—to fit our needs.

"Many, the Prince told me, would reject this, fearing the changes their brighter sides might bring to their lives. Those few who would embrace their sundered souls, though, would know their true destiny. It was to be my task—my holy charge—to set these truths down in writing."

Scholars have long wondered exactly what Renthon met in the mountains of Lamordia that winter's night. Many dismiss his claims as hallucinations or as tales made up to give his book credibility. Speculations include a vampire, a lord of the dark fey, or even a fiend from the Nether Realms.

Regardless of what happened to Renthon, he journeyed to Richemulot after the 'encounter' and began writing. The first located copy of *The Revelations* dates to 705, three years after the date given in the Introduction. Renthon spent his entire life making copies; when he disappeared shortly after the Grand Conjunction, he left over a thousand copies of the book behind in his house. Despite Renthon's prolific work and its wide distribution, *The Revelations* can take some effort to find—the Churches of Ezra and Bane have both condemned it, with the followers of Ezra declaring it "a danger to the faith and the souls of any reader" and the Banites calling it "subversive and blasphemous against the true order of the universe." Other clerics take a similar view; Wyan, leader of the Inquisitors in Tepest, burns at least one copy every season. Despite this condemnation, *The Revelations* remains popular among the curious and the dissatisfied, and if a reader searches, he can usually find a reckless or unscrupulous cleric willing to provide him with the first step toward continuing Renthon's dream.

Powers and Contents: After the Introduction, Renthon explains what the Prince of Twilight revealed to him:

"At the beginning, we were meant to have two spirits, one mortal, the other supernatural. Those who sought success within this world were to be bound to a spirit of the land, while seekers or servants of powers above would receive an angelic soul as well as a human one.

"Sadly, our souls were sundered by dark and jealous powers, with our better halves cast into a misty void where they are forced to watch us suffer as we are deprived of their aid and tormented by evil fiends. When the proper summonings are made, though, we can regain the lost fragment of our souls, and, after long service in which we bring our spirits into conformity with theirs, we can return to our original blessed state."

Renthon then begins describing the rituals needed. "To begin the cycle, someone trained in the priestly arts must conjure the first spirit. He may summon his own counterpart, or that of a friend or loved one. Upon the summoning, the first step toward reunification begins. The mortal side of the being receives great powers that he may use to help further his desires and to bring others to knowledge of their lost spirits. Once sufficient time has passed, and sufficient sacrifices have been made, the two spirits exist in harmony, and may become one once again."

The *conjure sundered soul* ritual described below can be performed by any priest who has access to the Summoning sphere, although casting this spell should be considered equivalent to Breaking an Oath or Breaking a Vow for many good priests. Those who receive clerical powers from the 'sundered souls' (see *conjure sundered soul* below) also receive the ability to use these two spells, even if they've never seen them.

The Revelations

Conjure Sundered Soul

(Conjuration/Summoning)
Sphere: Summoning
Level: 2
Range: Special
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 hour
Area of Effect: One human and one spirit
Saving Throw: Neg

According to Renthon, this spell allows a mortal being's lost soul to be located and summoned from its place of banishment. The truth, unbeknownst to most users of the spell, is more sinister.

This spell actually sends out a call across the Demiplane of Dread and possibly beyond, alerting fiends, dark fey, and spirits of the land that there's a soul ripe for corruption and possession. The type of creature that answers the summons depends on the chosen victim. Most normal folk, as well as low-level warriors and rogues, might find themselves meeting a boowray, baobhan sith (from the *RLMC*III) or other evil fey being, or a bodiless spirit that haunts the Land of Mists. Wizards, priests, and psionicists, meanwhile, conjure up an imp, quasit, or another type of fiend from the Lower Planes. These creatures, referred to as "spirits," may have corporeal form as well. Regardless of their nature, all spirits summoned by this spell take on a pleasing form, similar to an angel or a charming faerie, depending on the victim's nature.

The spell also grants the summoned being a degree of control and power over the caster. The victim becomes charmed by the spirit (a saving throw is permitted, but most victims of this spell, oblivious to the danger, choose to forgo their saves). In addition, the victim comes to believe in his 'spiritual half' as a divine being, bringing great powers and wisdom.

In game terms, the victim becomes a priest in service to the "bound" spirit, drawing powers from their own faith, the powers and supernatural nature of the spirit, and from other spirits the patron is able to gain aid from. 0-level characters become 1st-level priests, while those who already have a class become multiclassed with one level in the priest class. Those who are already priests gain both their normal spells and the spells granted by their new friend, but the spirit will usually lure the priest away from his original patron before too long. These priests receive access to the Charm and Summoning spheres as well as one other sphere appropriate to the spirit involved. A bloodthirsty quasit, for example, might grant the Combat sphere, while a spirit of shadows and darkness could give the caster the reversed versions of spells from the Sun sphere. Priestly combat values, saving

throws, and hit dice are also acquired, as the spirit encourages the new servant to "acquire the skills needed to defend our land from those who would rob us of our destiny." These priests can reach 7th level in their new class, but advancing is not easy. In addition to spending time with the spirit (gaining experience), the victim must also perform some service or make some sacrifice before the spirit increases their powers. The services often cut the slave off from the rest of society (and may be grounds for powers checks), and the sacrifices are of things dear to the victim. While the process of raising the victim to the proper levels continues, the spirit also encourages the devoted servant to recruit more individuals, that they too may know "the joy of oneness."

This bond can be broken with a *dispel evil* or *holy word* spell, which banishes the spirit and breaks its hold over the victim's soul. It can be most difficult to convince the victim to let this spell be cast, though, even if the spirit is prevented from interfering. The hold these spirits have over their servants tightens with each sacrifice given or command obeyed. By the time the 'priest' reaches 7th level, his patron spirit means everything to him. At this point, it is time for the use of the second spell contained in *The Revelations.*

Spirit's Reunification

(Enchantment/Charm)
Sphere: Summoning
Level: 4
Range: 10 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: One mortal and one spirit
Saving Throw: None

Followers of *The Revelations* believe this spell, the second rite contained in the book, permits the culmination of spiritual unity between a mortal and his lost spiritual half. Once this is' completed, the new being will be glorious and powerful, capable to seizing whatever it desires. In truth, this spell is a sophisticated and subtle soul-trapping spell. It can be cast only by and on someone bound to a spirit by the *conjure sundered soul* spell given above.

The spell requires a gem of at least 1,000 gp value as its material component. When the casting of the spell is complete, the caster's soul is drawn into the jewel, while the spirit now inhabits the caster's body. If the spirit had a body (as most fiends and dark fey do), it can switch at will between the mortal's body and its own, and can likewise switch the mortal's soul from its original body to the phylactery with but a thought. Bodiless spirits inhabit the mortal's body until such time as they decide to leave it, and can come back to it unless precautions are taken.

Any spirit can make use of all its powers from within the mortal's body. While they don't have access to the victim's skills or abilities, they have spent much time with the victim before the transfer, and can make a convincing imitation.

These possessing spirits can be driven out through *dispel evil* or *holy word*. Once that's done, placing the gem housing the caster's soul on the body's chest is enough to reunify the two. To prevent a second possession by the same spirit, though, the phylactery must be shattered, and the *remove curse* and *atonement* spells must be cast on the victim, or else the spirit can return and usurp the mortal's body at will. In addition, many victims freed from this spell slip into depression, believing that they actually were reunited with their "lost half."

Matthew Martin is becoming a regular Halloween contributor since last year's "Saga of the Mists.".

THE ECOLOGY OF THE GHOUL

Among the Carrion Crows

Alone in his study late at night, Pelagast the Younger chanced to notice a message burning in the brazier he kept to warm his aging bones.

THE PIECE OF PAPER HADN'T BEEN THERE A MOMENT BEFORE; indeed, the paper seemed to be pulling smoke out of the air, becoming more and more concrete with each passing second. Pelagast snatched at it quickly, lest the fully-formed note catch fire and be reduced to the smoke that had formed it.

The paper was still hot—he almost dropped it back into the brazier—but its smoky characters resolved themselves into letters. He recognized the handwriting as that of one of his colleagues, a fellow given to long absences in the pursuit of knowledge, one Wrennar the Laughing Mage. The message read thus:

"Learned colleagues and fellow necromages of the Bemmean council, I send you greetings from the underworld, and a report of the recent disruptions here. The objects of my study for the last year and more have been ghouls, ghasts, and a previously unknown ruling ghoul type, the shadow ghoul, a subtype that has formed a society among the ghouls. Among the races of the Underdark, these master ghouls are sometimes called the noble ghouls, or true ghouls. Their existence has shed much light on the formation and abilities of ghouls and ghoul-kind. Allow me to report to you the workings of this distinctly dangerous form of undead."

Wrennar's Expedition

My investigations began in the winter of 3812 by the Bemmean Reckoning, for I had required the entire summer to locate a group of at least marginally competent sellswords willing to take a chance in the deepest reaches of the Underdark. Our travels continued without incident until the twenty-third march below ground. Shortly after the first rest, we heard a sound like the dry rasp of insect wings—though we did not yet know it, it was a sound we would soon dread, for it was the sound of ghouls on the march.[1]

Within a minute, they were upon us, a swarm of wasted creatures with lambent eyes, the first ghouls we met in the Lands Below. Balint, our priest of Ouroboros, stepped forward to turn them aside, brandishing his serpent staff. The ghouls seemed reluctant to recognize the serpent-god's power, but after Balint hurled a few choice scriptures their way, they turned and retreated to the side of the passage as might be expected.[2]

1. Large groups of ghouls can march in almost complete silence; they do not breathe, and they prepare their weapons and armor for silent movement. When they march, only the vibration of their footfalls and the rush of air past their bodies marks their passage. This increases their chance of obtaining surprise to 1–4. When moving alone, a shadow ghoul has a 20% chance to move silently.

2. Shadow ghouls are difficult to get rid of; they are turned as wraiths. *Protection from evil* has no effect on shadow ghouls, even when strengthened with cold iron. All physical attacks against shadow ghouls inflict only half normal damage, as they are already dead and are well-protected by their undead state. They are immune or resistant to any form of *charm*, mental or psionic control, and *ESP*. They have 4+4 HD, rather than a ghast's standard 4 or a ghoul's 2. Shadow ghouls move at 12, are armor class 3, and enjoy Fanatical morale (17–18). They are worth 1,400 experience points.

by
Wolfgang Baur

illustrated by
Brad McDevitt

We forged ahead, but I could not resist examining these creatures as we passed. More than that, I weighed the odds of successfully capturing an intact specimen. With my mercenary companions, the odds seems slim. Furthermore, the ghouls were not as I had been taught, bestial, lumpy forms bereft of intelligence. Indeed, several of them carried weapons and all of them wore clothing. Though much of the clothing was tattered or worn, the weapons were in good repair.[3] Though the accouterments were surprising and at odds with what I thought I knew, the ghouls' distinguishing physical features were as I expected: forked tongues, hairy, doglike legs, and pointed or even ragged ears. A few of the older ghouls could be distinguished by their bald heads.[4]

Only scant seconds after we had passed them by, the ghouls rushed us in a body. Balint and the others were caught completely by surprise, but I had watched the undead things suspiciously and was ready for the attack. Invoking the elemental power of Osti's fire to destroy their front rank with a breath of flame, I gave my companions enough time to prepare a defense. Once the ghoul's first momentum was lost, we soon sent the rest of the pack howling into the darkness. Nevertheless, the entire incident was disturbing. Ghouls are among the easiest undead to turn or even to destroy utterly. How had these resisted? The question would not be answered for some days. We pushed the issue aside and set up camp.

Our rest was disturbed by the screams of Mandac, one of our younger warriors. He had been scratched in the fight a few hours ago, and already the wound showed signs of infection; red lines spread from the scab along the veins toward his heart.[5] Balint performed a healing ritual, checked the wounds for signs of similar problems, and then returned to sleep. By morning, Mandac's tracery of red lines had receded, and Balint reassured the warrior that such infections were rarely serious.

The next march we met and spoke with a small party of derro; they approached us with open hands from the shadows, and we had fought enough the day before. The degenerate dwarves warned us that the border of a ghoul "kingdom" lay just ahead—the derro themselves were returning from a trade mission there and had just recently passed a checkpoint marked by the gnawed bones of a dozen drow. My companions and I were amazed that anyone could trade with such grave-robbing filth, but we did our best to disguise our reactions. We believed that ghouls put little or no value on anything other than meat, grave goods, and a few shiny baubles. Why trade with them at all? But regardless, we spoke to the derro, listening to their tales of a ghoul kingdom and a nation of the undead.[6] Perhaps they were merely telling us stories to scare surface dwellers, or perhaps they hoped for some fee or trophy from us, but their stories did little but confuse. Balint asked the derro how the ghouls resisted his turning efforts, but they could tell us nothing. Given their consort with dark powers themselves, perhaps this should not be too surprising.

Not long after our meeting with the derro, we met our second group of ghouls, just as they had warned us. However, we were traveling quite stealthily at this point, covered by invisibility and priestly wardings, we caught them off-guard and chanced upon them as they fed. Two sentries stood watch while the rest slowly stripped the meat from a paralyzed victim.[7] Our attack

3. Like ghasts, shadow ghouls can use weapons. When they fight unarmed, they inflict 1–6/1–6/1–8 with their claws and teeth. Common ghouls are too stupid to do more than rend and claw. While shadow ghouls prefer to use forged weapons in hand-to-hand combat, they may also attack with claws and teeth, and with these natural weapons each attack offers a chance of paralysis (saving throw applies). Creatures paralyzed by a true ghoul remain paralyzed for 8–18 (6+2d6) rounds rather than the usual 3–8 of common ghouls or the 5–10 of ghasts.

4. The lack of new growth leads to complete baldness, though younger ghouls may retain thinning hair for years with proper care. Indeed, some nobles among the shadow ghouls wear wigs made of human or drow hair. These wigs fool some observers but can be detected by anyone within 10 feet who makes a successful Wisdom check.

5. All ghouls keep their teeth and claws full of the filth of carrion or the grave. Likewise, they keep their weapons smeared with charnel filth as a result, they spread numerous diseases. After each battle with ghouls, creatures wounded by the ghouls must make a saving throw vs. poison. Those who fail lose 1d6 hp each day until the disease is cured or until they make a Constitution check with a –4 penalty.

In the case of those injured by shadow ghouls, victims who fail are infected with ghoul-rot and begin the slow transformation into ghouls.

6. Ghouls have overwhelming effects on surrounding communities of creatures. They eat until all major sentient and animal species are exterminated or driven away, and they transform humans, derro, halflings, and half-elves into ghouls , increasing the hunger of the ghoul community.

Underground and surface communities faced with armies of ghouls sometimes take to burning their dead and killing their wounded, to prevent ghouls from appearing among them.

7. The ghoul's diet is a subject of considerable interest; few undead need to eat in the usual sense, digesting and excreting. A ghoul's feeding is more spiritual than physical. While it must eat, just as vampires do, a ghoul is nourished by the link to the flesh of sentient creatures, not by blood. If ghouls do not eat, they cannot heal their wounds. In addition, prolonged lack of sentient flesh breaks the strength of the ghoul's undead state, eventually returning the ghoul to a purely animal cunning. For ghouls to retain their intelligence over time, they must feast on the brains of sentient creatures.

caught them completely by surprise and threw their vile feast into a quick retreat. The victim had been gnawed to the bone; we buried him as best we could under the circumstances, piling rocks to make a simple cairn and blessing the ground he lay on to prevent the undead from returning to finish their meal.

Transformation

We met ghouls again after we had given up counting days; instead, we counted marches, though Balint argued that we should refer to them as "rests" instead, since we did not always march. In either case, on our twenty-second march, we learned at last all we wanted to know about them: their use of tools, their resistance to turning, their "kingdom" and trade with other races, and the method of their creation. The answer to the last seems to be the key to understanding the life cycles of not only shadow ghouls, but also of common ghouls and ghasts. But I've gotten ahead of the tale. First, the tale of how our expedition found what it sought.

I ADMIT I WAS A LITTLE TAKEN ABACK hearing such fine speech from a reeking, split-tongued creature . . .

We had continued beyond the ghoul "border crossing"—the drow bones were there, just as the derro had claimed—for two marches when we saw the first sign of civilization: a set of three sentries, armored in ill-kept chain and armed with spears. One of them had spotted our advance, for we had grown tired of marching in darkness and had lit a lantern. The ghouls had a lantern as well, though it was unlit. I convinced Balint and the warriors to keep their weapons sheathed and approached the sentries with open hands, speaking in the Undercommon I had mastered for the trip. As I suspected, they answered me, saying, "Welcome to the Great Army of the Ghouls. We are soldiers of Murliss, the Lady of Worms and general of this army. Who are you? What do you bring us?"

I admit I was a little taken aback hearing such fine speech from a reeking, split-tongued creature clearly meant for the grave years ago. But I rallied and spoke, "We are dwellers form the surface, come to learn the language and customs of the ghouls in return for precious gifts and magics." I made a little bow, as a mage should to an inferior.

"You'd best see the general, then," he said. "I am Surnliven, lieutenant of the second cohort. I give you my safe conduct into the camp to see the general."

"I see. And how can I trust this assurance?"

He straightened into a perfectly-straight, military posture. "A ghoul's word is his bond. I swear by my king that you will suffer no indignity at the hands of my troops."

I motioned my marching companions forward. I told them that we were entering the ghoul camp under the protection of a safe conduct, and that there we would meet and bargain with the ghouls for permission to enter their kingdom. They seemed suspicious, indeed they opposed the idea, but I calmed their fears by mentioning that I could always *teleport* us out of harm's way. I neglected to mention that this spell would not be enough to transport all of us.

I couldn't have been more mistaken about the size of the ghoul army. The darkness and silence of the ghoul camp had fooled me: we walked for fully ten minutes past row after row of ghouls preparing weapons, eating, herding prisoners (food?), and praying under the direction of a white-clad priest of Arabis, god of death, travel, and wisdom. I had expected the Lieutenant's boast to reveal little more than a patrol in force. The army we passed through numbered in the thousands. The darkness made an exact estimate impossible.

At last we came to a tent of spider silk, doubtless plundered from the drow. Two finely-outfitted guards in plate and full helms stood outside, though they stepped aside at a world from our escort. Within stood a ghoul regaled in black with a horned headdress and a wicked sword with a wavy blade. "I am Murliss, leader of this host. What do you bring me?" If it had not been for the pallor of her skin, I might have mistaken the figure before me for a knight of the surface world, so noble was her bearing and manner.[8]

"Ourselves and our strong swords, if you require mercenaries," I said.

The general waved the offer away. "What do you know of the city of Glimmerfell?"

"I have never heard of it," I said, truthfully. "But know that I am a wizard of Bemmea, and I have much to offer you. These soldiers behind me, for instance, will make good allies, and my knowledge of spellcraft is considerable. All I ask in return is the freedom to study your armies, your customs, and your soldiers." I heard a brief scuffle behind me as Balint protested, but I didn't turn to look. It was too late to turn back. Besides, my *stone skin* spell would protect me from the first of my mercenaries' blows, if they objected to my throwing in our lot with these ghouls.

"Your followers are already mine by virtue of their presence within my army's grasp. And if you are as ignorant of my enemies as you claim, I have little use for your either, surface mage." The ghoul calmly raised a goblet in my direction. "But I'm always looking for new recruits."

"Your lieutenant guaranteed our safe conduct," I said, making my words bolder than I felt.

8. Ghoul nobles have all of the abilities of priests except spell use, and may *summon shadows* once per day (as an 8th-level caster). They have 8+8 HD, AC or 2 or better, and often use magical weapons. They are turned as vampires.

Ghoul royalty cannot *animate dead* or *summon shadows* as their nobles do, but they can create automata, golems, special *wizard eyes* (like the Eyes of the King), and necromantic siege engines, huge constructs that resemble fused flesh golems. Shadow ghoul royalty may also eat the knowledge of any creature they devour whole, from liches to dead adventurers—this grants them spell ability equal to the highest-level creature whose brain they have devoured. They have 12+12 HD, an AC of –2 or higher, and always employ magical armor and weapons. Ghoul kings, queens, and emperors are turned as Special undead. Nobles are worth 6,000 experience points (plus 1,000 per level over 4th), while royalty is worth 14,000.

"Is this true, Surnliven?" asked the general.

"Indeed it is, general," said the lieutenant, saluting. "I personally guaranteed their safe passage into the camp," he smiled. "I said nothing of the trip out."

The general motioned to his soldiers. We turned to face them and heard the cry of a thousand hungry throats from without the tent. I had been outsmarted by a ghoul. I suspected it would be an embarrassing death.

A Final Journey

Listen closely: the transition from life to death is a path strewn with hazards, as the recent attempt at lichdom by Dragos the Mad showed. The great advantage of the shadow ghouls is that they have mastered portions of this path, and they help their future companions along it. This is not to say that all risks are circumvented. Creatures slain by a ghoul are often driven mad by the experience; they lose all memories of their former lives, indeed lose all their higher faculties, and become merely raving, fleshing-eating undead. These are the lesser or common ghouls.

But these sad husks are not the only possible result of a ghoul's transformation. Those who survive the transition into undeath with their faculties intact are in all ways stronger than their lesser kin. These few retain the intelligence and cunning of ghasts, and their link to the shadow plane that grants them power is stronger, allowing them to paralyze elves as well as other humanoids. But even ghasts are not the highest form of ghouldom; to enter that state requires help or a force of sheer will that ghasts rarely possess.

Long after the fight at the camp, I was able to observe the birth of a fledgling shadow ghoul. The prey—a young svirfneblin male—had been run down by a pack of shadow ghoul nobles and their retainers, dragged to complete exhaustion and then brought before a priest of Nerull.[9] Gnomes and dwarves were prized by shadow ghouls as breeding stock, because their small frames require less food than elven, orc, or human bodies do.[10]

The creature touched by a ghoul priest always become infected with a condition the ghouls call *grave rot*.[11] The resulting transformation is quite different from the creation of a common ghoul or ghast. First, the shadow ghoul is constantly attended by one of its fellows, who seems to provide an anchor point to strengthen the developing link to the elemental planes that power the undead. Though the transforming ghoul cannot see, it can hear even more keenly than normal; even spoken voices seem to thunder in its head. The subject retains its intelligence and its memories, far more than one might expect.[12] It also gains some control over its link to the plane of Shadow.[13] In fact, many humans retain the power of their former, breathing lives when they enter the ranks of the ghouls, just as many wizards retain their power when embraced by a vampire.[14] The slow ebbing of bodily feeling continues until one is paralyzed, unable to do more than listen to the drone and feel heat and breath leave the body. Then, a black nectar is forced into the dead subject's mouth, and a power from without animates the limbs, restoring feeling, sight, and the ability to move though not to breath. The sensation of is quite remarkable, like an infusion of poppy nectar or the application of lotus powder to the lips—a jolt of primal energy animates the limbs. Priests, however, suffer a noticeable decline after the change—not only have they been denied the promised afterlife, but they have become what many of them abhor.[15] Unlike lesser ghouls or ghasts, true ghouls emit no stench of death or decay, and they have fashioned a civilization of sorts here in the Underdark.

The transition to ghouldom is much easier for humans, dwarves, gnomes, and the humanoid species than it is for

9. The ghouls' patron god is Nerull, the deity of death and decay. Though the god is known to spurn the prayers and offerings of almost all sentient creatures, for some reason he accepts the devotion of the ghouls. Whether this is because his cold heart actually feels some warmth for the ghouls and their kin or because he finds them pitiful and amusing is a matter of speculation among ghoul theologians.

Shadow ghouls are led by two classes, priests and nobles, which are often at odds with each other. The powerful clerical leaders can create zombies and skeletons; the ghoul nobles lead most raiding parties and armies. Wizards among shadow ghouls generally arise among the priesthood but are occasionally found among the nobility as well.

The touch of a ghoul priest always drains 1 point of Strength, even when striking normally with a paralyzing claw. Great priests of 5th level and higher can *animate dead* once per week, with no limit to the number of undead they may ultimately control; high priests can fuse these dead into necromantic siege engines and conveyances of as many HD as they have levels. Priests range in ability from 1st to 11th level; they have 4+4 HD until they reach 4th level. Thereafter they gain 1+1 HD for each additional level they attain. Thus, for example, a 7th-level priest would have 7+7 HD. Priests are all turned as mummies, regardless of level. They are worth 3,000 experience point, plus 1,000 per level over 4th.

10. Small gnomes and dwarves transformed into ghouls retain their size but gain all normal shadow ghoul, ghast, or common ghoul abilities. In some instances, these smaller ghouls are trained as bat-riders, soaring through caverns as couriers and scouts on the backs of enormous mobats.

11. While the true ghoul priests are indeed largely responsible for the maintenance and multiplication of the line, the mechanism by which they passed on the closer planar connection of the shadow ghoul was a secret for many years. It is apparent to any observer that the priests' touch inflicts a deadly disease; the shadow ghoul, duergar, and drow call this disease grave rot. This rotting disease superficially resembles that caused by a mummy's touch, but it serves another purpose, which is the simple heart of the shadow ghoul's secret. Unlike other undead, they do not need to kill their victims to multiply. Instead, ghoul-rot transforms living flesh into the undead flesh of the ghoul. The victim never dies and is reborn, as is a vampire or a zombie. Instead, living flesh is slowly but inexorably replaced by shadow material, the source of undead power. Much as shades, ghouls derive their power entirely from this shadow-flesh.

The role of grave-rot also explains the existence of lesser forms of shadow ghoul. If the grave-rot process is disturbed (for instance, by the death of the intended target), a ghoul or ghast is created from the flawed vessel.

The power and influence of the ghoul priests comes from the magical disease or curse they carry. This disease is grave-rot; anyone killed by a priest in combat become a ghoul after a number of hours equal to the victim's level. The victim must make a saving throw vs. death magic; if it succeeds, he becomes a shadow ghoul. If it fails, he must make a system shock roll. If the system shock roll succeeds, he becomes a ghast in a number of days equal to his level or Hit Dice. If it fails, he becomes a lesser ghoul in number of days equal to victim's level or Hit Dice.

12. Common ghouls have a low intelligence (5–7), ghasts retain fragmentary memories and much intelligence (11–12), and shadow ghouls retain all memories and generally become more intelligent (15–18). However, all creatures transformed into ghouls gain chaotic evil or neutral evil alignments.

13 This control over the shadow link is limited to ghoul priests and wizards.

14. Characters of any level retain that level as ghouls and may continue to advance as members of the class. All kit, racial, and subclass bonuses are lost, however, with the exception of necromancer specialty wizards, who retain all their benefits.

Shadow ghouls can gain levels as do living things, strengthened by an ever-growing link to the plane of Shadow. They may be fighters, priests, thieves, or mages but may not be members of subclass other than necromancer. They are limited to 9th level in all the classes available to them except priests, who may attain 11th level.

15. Few gods embrace undead worshipers, and thus priests lose a level and lose all access to spells above second level when they become ghouls. However, gods of death usually take up the sponsorship of any such priest who embraces a new faith.

elves, half-elves, and drow.[16] In general, however, any sentient, warm-blooded creature capable of magic can be transformed into a ghoul. As ghouls age, their original species becomes less and less obvious, and their similarity to other ghouls grow.

A ghoul's touch is the source of its power.[17] All ghouls, even the lesser ones and the newly-created, can paralyze their prey, allowing them to feast on still-living flesh. Some can paralyze elves, some can mimic the effect of a *chill touch* spell, and the greatest among them can command shadows, inflict grave rot, and even command other undead. These powers are all derive from the ghoul's link to the Negative material plane.[18] The link of common ghouls to this plane is weak, and thus their paralyzation ability is likewise weak. The link of ghasts is stronger, so their ability to paralyze elves is greater as well. However, the vile grave-stench of shared by common ghouls and ghasts is entirely absent in shadow ghouls. This is because the imperfect link of the two lesser species permits their bodies to decay over time, eventually collapsing altogether, while shadow ghoul's perfect link to the Negative plane permits their bodies to be entirely preserved from corruption. Any source of contagion and rot is kept from them and focused on their enemies.[19]

This new race of ghouls is the greatest discovery of my journey, and indeed of my career in necromancy. I maintain that the ghouls commonly found on the surface world are pale reflections of the true ghoul race, for the ghouls of the Underdark are intelligent, obey the social ladder common to civilized races, and worship their own gods. Indeed, shadow ghouls are quite religious, for they see the survival of their intelligence as a gift from Nerull. Without his blessing, they believe, they would sink to the realm of common ghouls. As a result, all ghouls show some degree of piety, if only by uttering Nerull's name before they feed, or as a battle cry.[20]

Preliminary research indicates that a true ghoul who is slain might still survive if its planar link is strong enough, becoming a spectre.[21] This almost always means that the ghoul is a true ghoul and a noble; weaker shadow ghouls do not survive the transformation, presumably because too little of their substance has been replaced by shadow flesh. More research is necessary before I can verify this hypothesis; unfortunately, obtaining willing experimental subjects among the shadow ghoul nobility has proven more difficult than anticipated.

OBTAINING WILLING EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS among the shadow ghoul nobility has proven ... difficult ...

The White Kingdom

When I awoke from the transformation—for surely, dear reader, by now you have guessed that I have joined the Elect Nobles of the Great and Potent Kingdom of White Bone—I was lying on a simple tombstone graven into the cavern floor, meant to represent my mortal life, cast off and beneath me. As a ghoul, I would soon be expected to build a tomb of my own, for my final rest, though it might be centuries in coming. I could not yet read the tombstone's text, but it was surely mine.[22] I had entered with all my faculties intact, and indeed even my wizard's gift had not abandoned me. I endeavored, with more fervor than ever, to continue my researches into the nature of the ghouls' undead state and into their secular state, a realm of simple needs and complex hierarchies.

The Kingdom of the Ghouls, sometimes called the White Kingdom, is both a city and a series of settlements in the deep Underdark. Ruled by their founder and his small court, the city has expanded at the expense of other races of the Underdark, especially the drow and the svirfneblin, whose dead can be transformed to swell the ghoul army's ranks. Why do undead creatures need a city? For many reasons, but chief among them are the common defense and the need for workshops to construct automata.[23] Fearsome as ghouls are, they are social creatures, depending on one another for survival in the hostile environs of the Underdark.

16. The human transition to ghouldom is much easier than that of most other races except dwarves, whose high Constitution makes the shift bearable. Elves, however, perhaps because of their unsleeping minds, suffer greatly during the change and rarely become more than mere ghasts. They suffer a –4 penalty to all saving throws and ability checks related to the change into undeath. Half-elves suffer a –2 penalty, and gnomes and halflings gain no benefit except as provided by their Constitution.

In the Underdark, the most common prey of ghouls are drow, svirfneblin, dwarves, and derro, but any warm-blooded creature can be made into a ghoul.

17. Why touch? Elves are immune to the touch of lesser or common ghouls for the same reason they are immune to *charm* and *sleep* spells; the ghoul-touch is a type of glamour that paralyzes through suggestion and enchantment, rather than through any toxin or life-draining effect.

18. Some would argue the proper plane is that of Shadow; the correct answer is unclear.

19. Dagros the Mad has suggested that a ghoul's stench is due to the decay and absorption of rotting meat. This may be so, but it leaves the shadow ghouls' lack of odor unexplained. Dagros also suggested that the stench rather than touch is the medium of its paralyzation, but he also suggested this of troglodytes. A few members of the Academy maintain that the two influences work in concert. More study is required.

20. In other realms, the ghouls pay homage to Orcus, Bane, Arabis, and to other powers of death, decay, darkness, and evil. Ghouls are as undiscriminating in their choice of patrons as they are in their choice of meats.

21. Any slain true ghoul noble who makes a saving throw vs. death magic immediately becomes a spectre, gaining 1 additional Hit Die and becoming more difficult to turn.

22. Ghouls speak a language of their own, Ghoulish, which they slowly "remember" in the first weeks after they awake from the transformation to undeath. It is thought that the knowledge is imparted to the ghouls either by the plane of Shadow or by some god residing there who created the ghouls. The transfer's principles are still unclear.

23. Ghoul priests and mages are experts at constructing, commanding, and destroying magical golems of all types, especially those of stone and bone. They have a love for automatons of all kinds, and they are experts at constructing new types of both servants powered by necromantic magic and at golem manufacture.

In addition, they have perfected a sort of undead siege engine called the ghoul war machine. This unholy contraption is composed of the fused remains of 40 or more zombified creatures; their flesh is magically melded to gather around a central beam to create a living battering ram. The flesh is then hardened to the consistency of soft stone; the result is a heavy, durable engine capable of battering down stone portals, gates, and obstacles of all kinds, as well as serving as a bridge over small chasms (up to 15 feet wide).

The creature has 40 legs and can be ridden comfortably by as many as four riders. INT semi- (2–4); AL N; AC 2; MV 9; HD 16; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2–40; SA crush, trample; SD immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ G (30' long, 9' tall); ML 18; XP 10,000 each. It can be turned as "Special" undead, and it can crush foes. If a ghoul battering ram strikes a foe with a natural 20, it destroys all items carried by the target unless they save versus a crushing blow at –5. When the ram strikes a foe, he must make an ability check equal to half his Strength (percentile Strength counts as 19 for this calculation). If the check fails, the victim suffers an additional 2d10 hp damage as the ram tramples him.

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In addition, their city contains many areas where the ghouls can build their war machines; these labors may require months of work and the industry of hundreds of priests, flesh-shapers, and necromancers. These war machines help defend the ghoul's city and attack their neighbors' cities.

The kingdom lies near the Cloaker Rift—a landmark surely as familiar to those who have traveled extensively in the Lands Below as the Vault of the Drow. There, between cavern and rift the two races exist in a fragile co-existence. Indeed, the cloakers and the ghouls have joined together in an alliance against their mutual enemies. Normally, the proud ghouls would disdain any such alliance, but even ghouls have enemies they fear. In the case of the shadow ghouls, the enemies they fear are few. Their greatest foes are the kuo-toans, who are immune to the ghoul's paralyzation ability and whose icthyoid bodies cannot be transformed into ghoul-flesh. In return, the psionically-immune ghouls assist the cloakers against their foes, the illithids.

The White Kingdom is lit by an unusual form of illumination called ghoul-light. This yellowish-green light is shed by special lanterns; it is a weak glow that discomfits drow but does not eliminate infravision. In addition, legends say that it reveals all hidden things to ghoul eyes, even those on another plane or hidden behind thin screens or barriers.[24] The secret of manufacturing the special oils that create ghoul-light lanterns are closely guarded by the ghoul priests and unknown to other races. Indeed, it seems that the priests among the ghouls are the secret masters of the kingdom, for rarely do the nobles lead a simple raid—much less lead an army to war—without the backing of the priests.

The priests, while they are always eager for both sacrifices to their gods and new converts, are rarely found at the front lines. They prefer to work from just beyond the front, choosing some to be transformed into more ghoul soldiers, others to serve the ghoul armies as fodder. I have seen the priests' ceremonies, clouded in smoke and harsh incense, preparing to ease the transition from life to unlife.[25] To prevent a creature infected with grave rot from becoming a shadow ghoul, they either make sure it is quickly devoured (within 24 hours) or ensure that it is not attended by a spirit guide, leaving the body to linger and grow mad on the path between life and death.

Contrariwise, when they wish to strengthen the link to the shadow plane, they burn special gutting candles around the body until it rises. The ceremony is named the Chant of Flickering Hours after these lights, and after the flickering spark of the new ghoul's mind as it struggles to retain some memories while accommodating new appetites. Young ghouls are generally fed cooked meat for the first few weeks of their lives to ease the transition to an exclusively carnivorous diet; this behavior has never been recorded among surface ghouls.

These creatures were as distant from their surface-dwelling cousins as the drow are from the grey elves. Indeed, I was later to learn, they disdain their brutish relations, considering them distant kin at best, and embarrassing kinfolk at that. Having had a chance to compare the two at closer quarters, I am inclined to agree.[26]

24. The magical, yellowish-green ghoul light is quite distinctive, a phosphorescent glow the color of marsh gas and rot. This light reveals hidden things and dispels illusions of all kinds; in a way, it is the reverse of *true seeing*. Invisible, ethereal, and shadowed creatures all become visible in ghoul-light, as do creatures cloaked in illusion or altered forms, even lycanthropes. It inflicts the same penalties on drow as a continual light spell.

25. Since shadow ghouls are created by their priests, the priests' control over ghoulish politics is considerable. They can breed new generations to support a war effort and create new worshipers for their god, or they can slow the transformation and prevent a body from becoming a shadow ghoul, leaving it to fall into the madness and decay of the ghasts and common ghouls.

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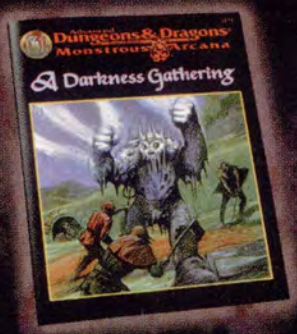

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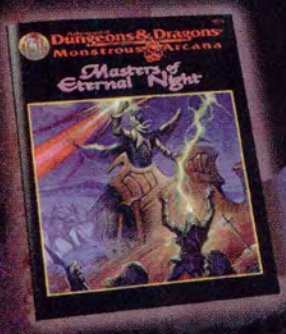

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All this information took me months of diligent investigation to ferret out: questioning the priests, speaking to the nobles (though not all answered), and generally annoying all who would suffer my inquiries. Perhaps I eventually grew too zealous in my search for the source of the kingdom's power, for one day, as I was dissecting and noting the degree of mummification in the form of a partially transformed goblin-ghoul. I received an unexpected visitor: a metallic herald of the realm's king. The figure was clad entirely in plate armor, well-oiled and coated in a layer of black enamel.[27] My indiscrete inquiries had aroused the notice of the king, and he requestioned my presence in the palace of Blackgate.

THE MAIN GATE was under the watchful eye of two strange devas—winged but black as pitch. Perhaps they were spirits . . .

I had long desired an audience with King Doresain, founder and tyrant of the realm, but so far I had been unable to obtain one. I donned my best robes, called Balint, my ghast servant, to attend me, and made my way to the center of the necropolis. I was told that he permitted no conflict among his subjects (an assertion I was later to discover false[28]), and thus I felt safe approaching his palace. Its appearance did not inspire as much confidence: Blackgate teeters nigh on the edge of an abyss. The main gate was under the watchful eye of two strange devas—winged but black as pitch. Perhaps they were spirits; no one could ever quite explain their origins to my satisfaction.

Beyond the portal, past the gatekeeper, my armored companion left me. I was handed to the care of a rosewater-scented chamberlain, though he seemed to have few words for me. "Follow me," he said, "and say nothing until you are addressed." Down black passages, I was brought into the coldest halls of the palace.

The halls leading to the audience chamber were cold and drafty; my ghoul guide, of course, did not feel the chill, but my newer flesh still remembered chills. The king himself sat in a hall limned in ghoul-light and surrounded by a set of floating skulls. I had heard of these: they were said to be the ensorcelled heads of wizards who had displeased him. I resolved to be careful, bowed deeply, and waited for the king to speak.

He took his time examining me, sending a small fiery bat closer to me. I had heard of these creatures and had even seen them from a distance—small green comets flitting through the darkness. Called the Eyes of the King, they are enchanted spies their liege used to keep watch on his distant servants and armies. Though they resemble bats constantly engulfed in green faerie fire, it is said that the king sees everything their eyes see.[29] I fidgeted until the thing disappeared down the hall.

The king spoke: "You are the first surface dweller in many years to stand before me. Tell me, are there many more of your kind who might come to visit."

"Yes, there are, " I said. "In my breathing life, I was a wizard of a city of wizards. Many of them are curious about your realms. Surely they would come if you offered them an invitation and a chance at new knowledge." I considered that perhaps, with the help of a few members of the Council, it would not be too difficult to seize power here and take the riches of the ghouls for ourselves.

The king did not notice my treacherous thoughts. "Arrange it," he said. His hollow eye sockets turned away to contemplate the flickering of his skull-servants. I had half a hundred questions—about the mechanisms of paralysis, about my own growing and disquieting desire to possess grave goods[30]—but the eldest of the ghouls had no time for them, or for me.

And so, before I close this missive, a last request. The king has invited you to come attend upon him and dine at the heart of this fabulous kingdom. Please do attend. The meal wouldn't be the same without you.

Your devoted Servant,
Wrennar the Laughing Ghoul

Wolfgang Baur maintains small shrines to Clark Ashton Smith and E.R. Eddison, and makes regular offerings. Many of the events detailed in this article figure prominently in Wolf's "Kingdom of the Ghouls" adventure appearing in DUNGEON® Adventures *#70.*

26. Ghouls are quite dangerous to other races of the Underdark, as they can overwhelm most living races with sheer numbers. If ghouls ever expand their numbers too far, they might be able to besiege and conquer a city stronghold of one of the major races and then convert many of the dead to their own cause, to take the next city. Despite the severity of this threat, in general, living races tend to treat the ghouls as a form of rot that must be contained. The reason is simple; none of them can afford the losses they might incur in an all-out assault against the ghoul capital. Even if they wiped out the ghouls, they might leave themselves easy prey for another inimical Underdark species.

27. This figure was surely a helmed horror or similar automaton, for the ghoul-king does not trust his subjects and grants many tasks to the dozens of machines that inhabit the palace. The shadow ghoul nobles emulate this fashion, though few are able to construct or purchase such servants.

28. When there are too many of the undead and not enough living things for them to feed on, the ghouls enter a frenzy of madness, killing and slaying one another until their numbers are reduced to a level their environment can sustain.

29. The king of the ghouls commands a special form of magical scrying that no other race of the Underdark can match. The Eyes of the King are difficult to avoid or lose once they find an intruder; they flit through darkness almost more quickly than the eye can follow. They are said to patrol regular routes on the borders of the ghouls' kingdom. Each Eye acts as a *wizard eye* of unlimited distance and duration. Only the king and perhaps the priests understand the spell that creates them. Others who claim to know the secret have been driven insane when they attempt to duplicate the spell's effect.

30. Ghouls develop a fetish for death and things of the grave; generally, this desire seems to be a sort of nesting principle, as they construct elaborate tombs for themselves. Far from feeling immortal as vampires do, most shadow ghouls seem to know instinctively that they will die again. Their time as ghouls merely gives them the opportunity to gather memento moris.

In practice, this love for grave goods gives shadow ghouls treasure types B, T, R, S, and T. Nobles also gain Q×3, X, and Y.

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Convention Calendar

October

AndCon

October 1–4 OH

SeaGate Convention Center, Toledo, Ohio. Events: LARPs, RPGA® events, including four new Living City™ tournaments, *Magic: the Gathering** tournaments and more. Pre-registration; weekend badge $25, one day badge $15. Onsite; weekend badge $30, one day badge $18. Download a copy of the Pre-registration Book from our website at www.andonunlimited.com.

KarmaCon

Oct. 16–18 NC

WNC Agricultural Center, Asheville, NC. Guests: Sean Patrick Fannon, Jackie Cassada, Nicky Rea, and Jim Crabtree. Events: White Wolf LARP, masquerade ball, *Magic* tournament, *Warhammer**, *Warhammer 40K**, dealer's market, charity merchandise and auctions, roleplaying games, RPGA® tournament, *Magic 8-ball** tournament, and more. For more information contact: KarmaCon, P.O. Box 19866, Asheville, NC 28805. Email: info@karmacon.org. Web: www.karmacon.org

Archon 22

Oct. 2–4 MO

Gateway Convention Center and Holiday Inn, Collinsville, IL. Guests: James P. Hogan, John Sies, Lester Smith, Ricky Dick, and Karen Dick. Events: writers' workshops, panels, presentations, videos, grand masquerade show, art show, and gaming. Gaming events include: RPGA sanctioned roleplaying, miniatures, board games, and trading card games. Registration: $25 until 8/31, $30 afterward. Contact: Archon 22, P.O. Box 8387, St. Louis, MO 63132-8387. Web: www.stlf.org/archon/index.html

Necronomicon '98

Oct 9–11 FL

Radisson Inn-Sabal Par, Tampa, FL. Guest of Honor: C.J. Cherryh. Other guests include Jane Fancher, Barbara Delaplace, and Jack Haldeman. Events: writer and artist panels, art show, radio theater, Ygor party, masquerade, trivia quiz, charity event, dealer's room, ice cream social, Carnival of Souls, and more. Membership is $18 until September 15, 1998 and $25 after. For more information contact: Necronomicon, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview, FL 33568. Email: raggedyann@compuserve.com. Web: www.stonehilll.org.

November

Carnage at the Crossroads

Nov 6–8 NH

Radisson Inn, Lebanon, NH. Events: miniatures, roleplaying, card games, board games, sanctioned Type II Magic tournament, *Puffing Billy** tournament, L5R sword tournament, LARP, *Warhammer, Starfleet Battles**, and more. For more information contact: Carnage at the Crossroads, R.F.D. #1 Box 592A, Windsor, VT 05089. Email: carnagecon@aol.com. Web: http://members.aol.com/carnagecon/index.htm.

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In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

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If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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✪ European convention

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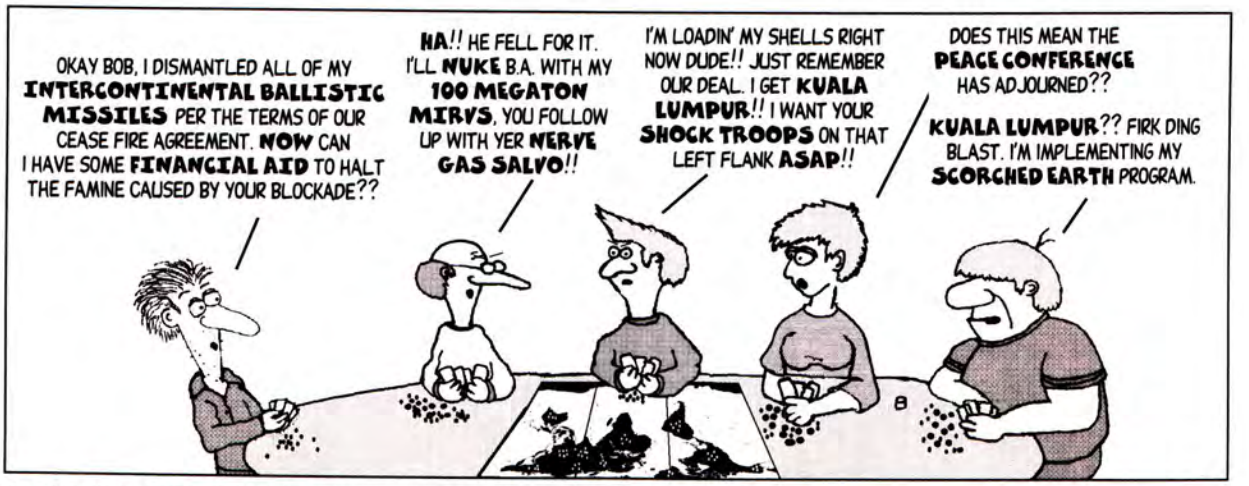
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Knights of the Dinner Table
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By Jolly R. Blackburn

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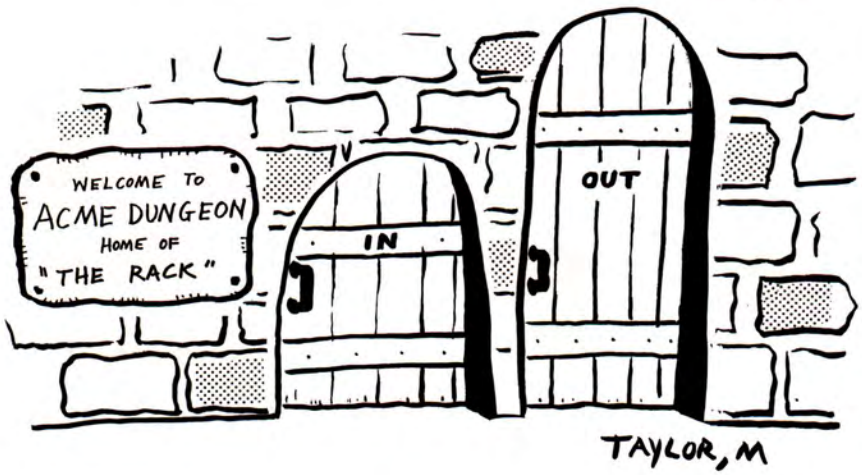
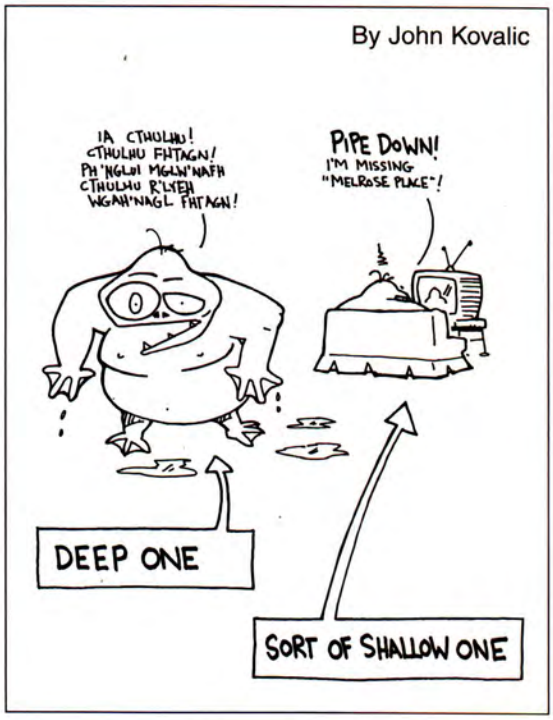


By John Kovalic



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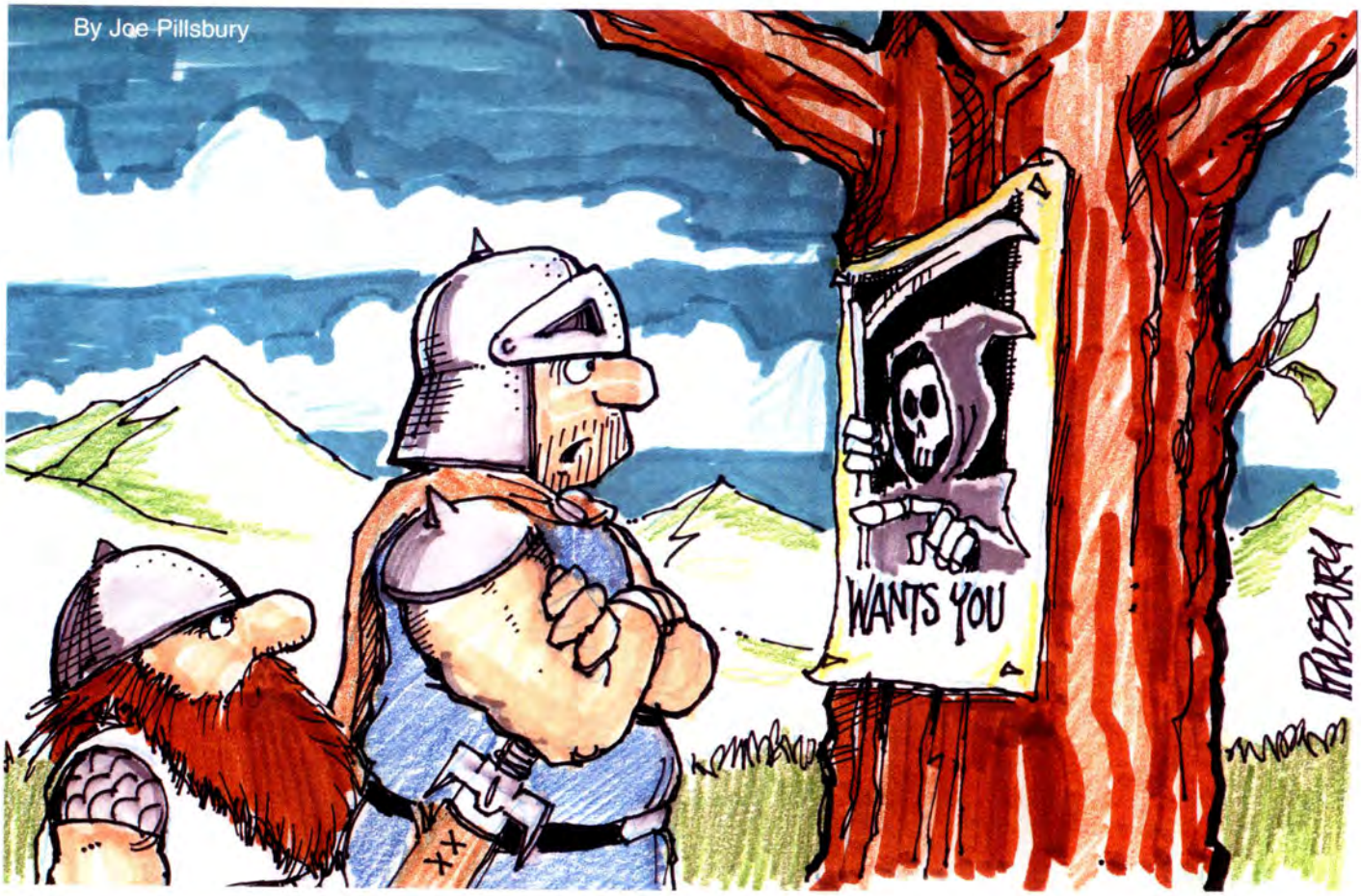
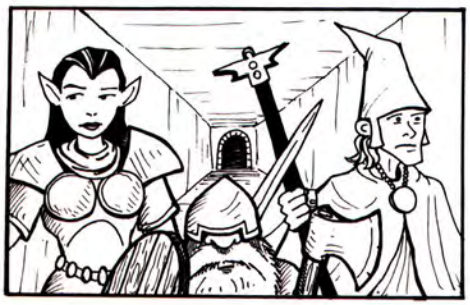
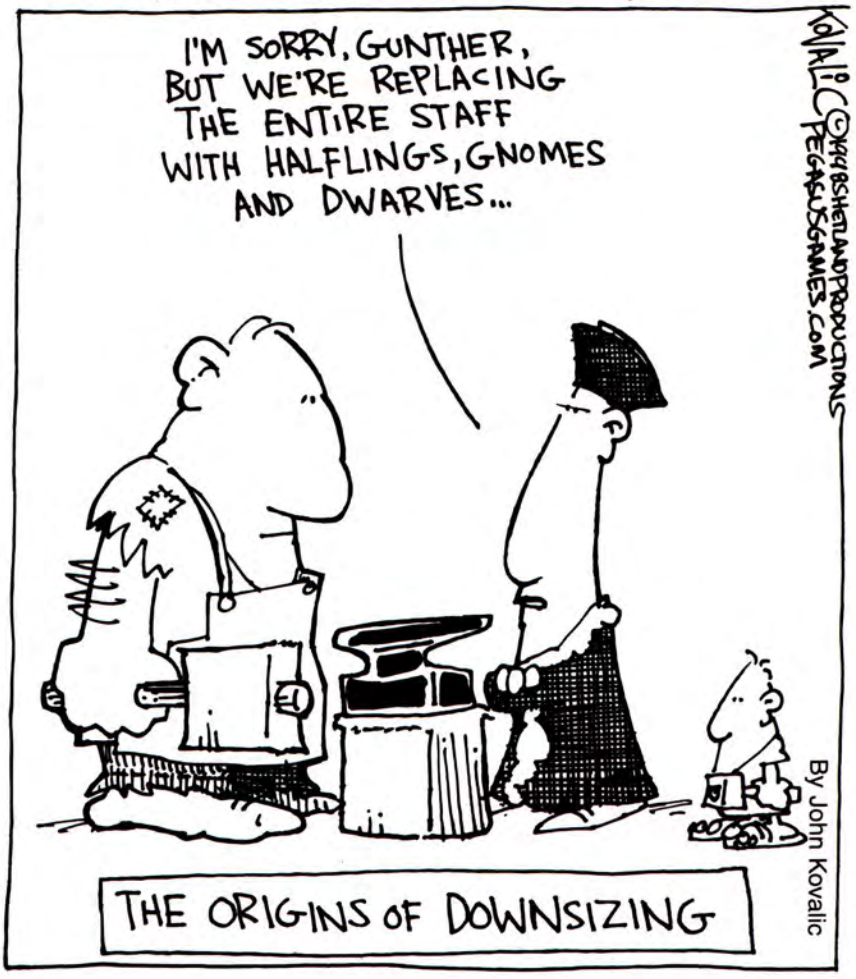




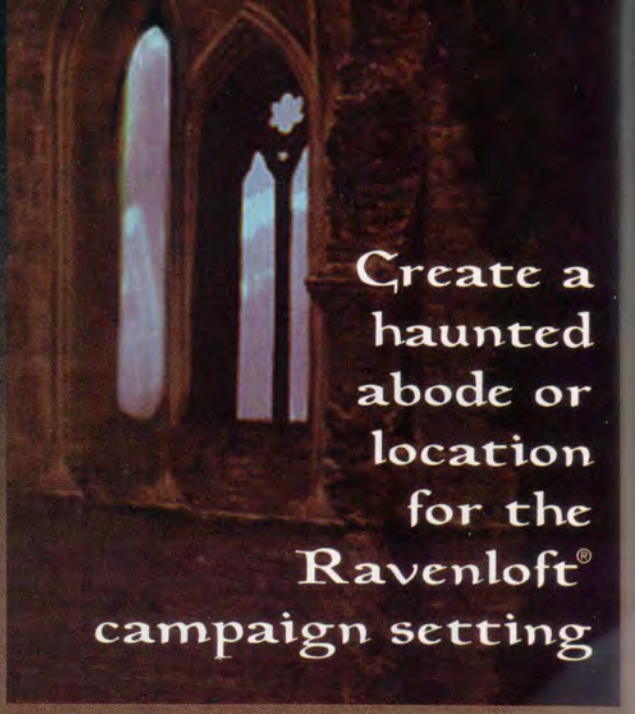
By Dori Anderson

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF

by John Kovalic


I'M SORRY, GUNTHER, BUT WE'RE REPLACING THE ENTIRE STAFF WITH HALFLINGS, GNOMES AND DWARVES...
KOVALIC ©KOVALICPEGASUSGAMES.COM
By John Kovalic
THE ORIGINS OF DOWNSIZING

HAUNTED SITES



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Dragon® Magazine

"Haunted Sites" Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your proposed Haunted Sites Design or Description ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR"), DRAGON Magazine Haunted Sites Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many Entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries may not exceed 1,000 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), November 13, 1998. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's format, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: All Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The three winners of the Haunted Sites Design contest shall each receive a free copy of each product in the 1999 RAVENLOFT® game product line (approximate retail value $90.00). Prizes will be distributed as they become available.

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for, late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to DRAGON Magazine Haunted Sites Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by November 30, 1998. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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"Haunted Sites" Contest

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Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

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RPGA? WHADDYA WANT TO HANG OUT WITH THOSE GUYS FOR?
AW C'MON, DAVE. IT'S FUN TO MEET NEW PLAYERS; BESIDES I MIGHT GET MY ADVENTURE PUBLISHED. THIS COULD BE MY TICKET TO THE BIG TIME!!

FORGET IT, DAVE! CAPTAIN SPUD BOY JUST WENT AWOL! DON'T SWEAT IT. I'LL RUN YOU THROUGH MY ADVENTURE ON SATURDAY!!
UH....OKAY.
THAT'S GREAT, B.A.! I'LL BE THERE TOO. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING WITH OTHER PARAGON PLAYERS!!
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Roleplaying Reviews

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Ratings

The Best

Excellent

Good

Fair

Might Be Useful

Not Recommended

Those Thrilling Days of Yesteryear

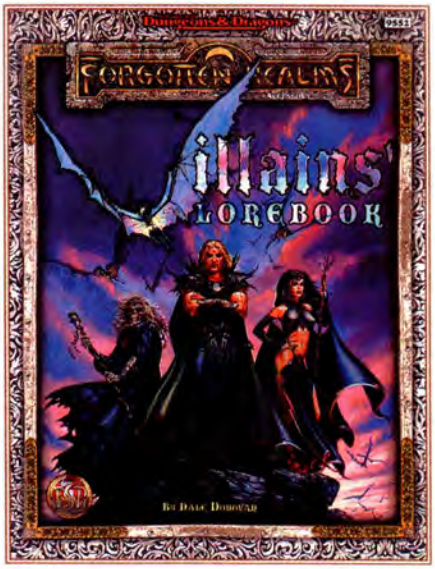
A common protest from today's legion of ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® aficionados is that TSR releases far too many support products. "It's just too hard and/or too expensive to keep up," a few fans have been known to complain.

When I was an AD&D® game fanatic, back in the game's early days, we had exactly the opposite problem. New TSR products were rare and highly anticipated. Once each long-delayed release arrived, it was inevitably consumed, dissected, played, and replayed just long enough for word of the next release to leak out, building the anticipation all over again. Because each release was a special event in those days, the players shared a common culture that's all but disappeared from today's game. Whenever two gaming groups encountered each other for the first time, they would inevitably exchange war stories from the *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* or discuss their individual approaches to conquering the *Vault of the Drow.* Today's players, on the other hand, have so many available options that two separate groups can play for months without sharing a single monster or magic item.

Of course, I happen to believe that the staggering variety of options open to today's fans is a good thing, and I'm constantly reminding those players who complain about the proliferation of AD&D products that there's no logical reason to buy everything. On the other hand, I do admit to a certain fondness for those rare, early AD&D releases and the sort of games they forced upon us. Back in those days, nobody was ashamed to run a clever "dungeon crawl," and the challenges faced by the adventurers were so clinically objective and infamous that any rewards earned by the players seemed so much more impressive. All too often, today's adventures, with their emphasis on "story," are little more than railroad trains designed to unfold the author's idea of the plot regardless of the decisions the players might make along the way.

Apparently, someone in TSR's new Seattle-based chain-of-command shares my enthusiasm for the good old days. Shortly after Wizards of the Coast acquired TSR, WotC management announced their intentions to turn back the clock in several interesting respects. The most significant of these promises was undoubtedly the planned relaunch of the GREYHAWK® campaign, Gary Gygax's prototypical AD&D setting that was finally shelved in the early 90s due to lackluster sales. Whether these moves will appeal to a new generation of D&D® players as much as they appeal to a handful of fanatics and the last few old-timers such as myself remains to be seen. In any case, a healthy TSR with a full release schedule can only be good news for gamers.

This month, let's take a look at a few recent TSR products that make me particularly nostalgic for the old days.



Villain's Lorebook

AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS® Sourcebook

160-page black-and-white sourcebook

TSR Inc. $22.95

Design: Dale Donovan

Art: Todd Lockwood, David Martin, Fred Fields, Keith Parkinson, Jeff Easley, and Paul Jaquays

Cover: Todd Lockwood

Way back when, one of the rare TSR releases my gaming group and I awaited so eagerly was a little white pamphlet called *The Rogues Gallery*. In theory, *The Rogues Gallery* was supposed to present a bunch of ready-made antagonists that DMs could toss at their players. In practice, the bulk of the book was little more than nameless, flavorless game statistics devoid of personality, substance, and

adventure ideas. I suppose the *Gallery* was a great asset to DMs who were incapable of simply inventing or rolling an NPC's attribute scores once they became relevant, though the real purpose of the product was never quite clear. In any case, the detailed (for that era) write-ups of Bigby, Tenser, and other infamous characters from Gary Gygax's own GREYHAWK campaign found in the *Gallery's* last few pages prevented product from being a total disappointment.

IN MANY WAYS, the *Villains Lorebook* is the modern equivalent of the original *Rogues Gallery*.

In many ways, the *Villains Lorebook* is the modern equivalent of the original *Rogues Gallery*. This time around, the all-but-useless pages of nameless statistics are gone and the author cuts right to the detailed descriptions of infamous characters. These particular characters (29 in all) are drawn from various FORGOTTEN REALMS novels. A particularly telling illustration of just how much the average RPG campaign has evolved over the years is the fact that, although each of these write-ups is far more detailed than the half-page entries for Bigby and company in the original *Rogues Gallery*, they still seem disappointingly sketchy. While each entry includes information on the character's favored combat tactics, allies, enemies, appearance, personality, favored locales, history, goals, and a few notes on how the character might fit into a campaign, each of these tidbits is remarkably breezy. A book that covered only half as many characters but included more than a rough personality sketch for each as well as far more comprehensive suggestions for incorporating the character into a campaign would have been more useful. Not only that, but most of these characters are based upon such broad archetypes that an enterprising DM could probably improvise their equivalent without too much difficulty.

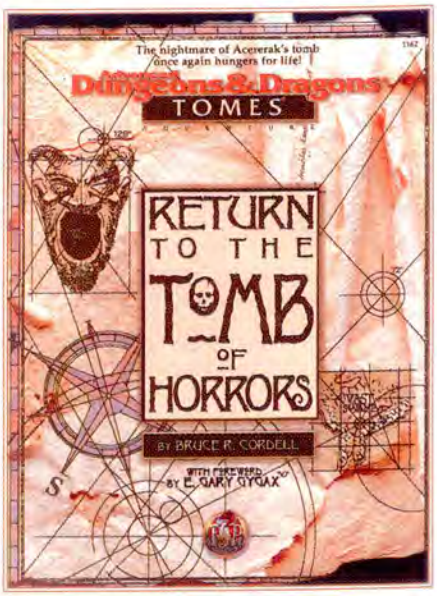
Anyway, the *Villain's Lorebook* is reminiscent of the old *Rogues Gallery* in another interesting respect. A note in the book's introduction states that "... more than a few of the characters described herein do not strictly follow the rules of the AD&D game as presented in the *Player's Handbook* and the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. This was mandated by the simple fact that many of the talented authors of the Realms novels are not game designers ... they are more concerned with telling an interesting, exciting story."

In the original *Rogues Gallery*, several of the infamous PCs from the GREYHAWK campaign displayed characteristics and abilities specifically prohibited by the AD&D rules. Such is the case here as well. Although the notion that NPCs are not quite bound by the rules is a long-established AD&D tradition, the idea that it's sometimes necessary to violate the rules to create an interesting character is somewhat disconcerting. The traditional defense for this tactic is to explain that the anomalous characters are "legendary" or "exceptional." But shouldn't the PCs have the opportunity to become legendary and exceptional themselves?

Also included are a handful of descriptions of various unique monsters and villainous organizations that crop up in the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels. Although this material is much easier to adopt for use in the average campaign, long-time fans of the Realms should note that much of it has been recycled from earlier sourcebooks and supplements. And speaking of recycled material, the central color plates all recycle artwork from earlier sources (some of it relatively low quality for TSR) and add nothing at all to the product. It's clear that some of these pieces weren't even intended to represent the characters the captions claim they depict (the text describes Kierkan Ruffo as having "matted, black hair," while the painting on page 95 depicts him with bright blond hair). It's probable that cutting the color plates would have allowed TSR to lower the Lorebook's steep $22 price tag.

Anyway, all of that said, what the *Villains' Lorebook* does, it does fairly well. The descriptions of the various NPCs are generally cogent, the book covers a wide variety of antagonists and anti-heroes, and the black-and-white illustrations of each character are quite good and useful in play (though, embarrassingly, a single piece is used in two separate places to illustrate two different characters).

Evaluation: In the end, the usefulness of the *Villains' Lorebook* probably depends upon the extent to which the DM and players are familiar with the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels that serve as its source. If the players are all familiar with his backstory, the sudden appearance of one these ill-doers might provide for powerful drama. Similarly, fans of the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels might appreciate the statistics found in the *Lorebook* as a sort of measuring stick they can use to rate the effectiveness of their own characters.


The nightmare of Acererak's tomb once again hungers for life!
Dungeons & Dragons
TOMES
RETURN TO THE TOMB OF HORRORS
BY BRUCE R. CORDELL
WITH FOREWORD BY E. GARY GYGAX

Return to the Tomb of Horrors

AD&D Boxed Set Adventure

160 page two-color adventure booklet, 32 page black-and-white Illustration booklet, 16 page full color Maps and Monsters booklet, 8-page black-and-white prop handout, full color play aid, reproduction of the original S1: *Tomb of Horrors*

TSR Inc. $29.95

Design: Bruce R. Cordell

Forward and Original Design: E. Gary Gygax (with ideas from Alan Lucien)

Art: Arnie Swekel, Glen Michael Angus, Phil Robb, Diesel, and Rob Lazzaretti

This package seems specifically designed to engender pangs of nostalgia in us old-timers. *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* drags the adventurers back to Acererak's tomb, subject of the first dungeon module TSR ever published. An early version of the tomb was used as the official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® tournament at the very first Origins convention. The revised, published version first saw print in 1978.

Back in the old days, *Tomb of Horrors* was widely known as the ultimate challenge. Reputed to be the most deadly dungeon in circulation, characters who managed to enter the Tomb and return unscathed earned some serious boasting rights. In theory, the Tomb was designed to test the adventurers' wits in addition to their battle prowess; it's home to some of the nastiest tricks and traps that have ever seen print. In practice, though, the original *Tomb of Horrors* tests nothing so much as the players' luck. Many of its obstacles are extraordinarily arbitrary; several inflict severe, unavoidable damage if the adventurers make only an extremely minor mistake (or no mistake at all!). The phrase "no saving throw" appears all too many times in the text. While some of the Tomb's encounters can be foiled by the legitimate application of "skill," most are conquered only with an arbitrary guess as to the nature of the next trap or an overly abundant supply of powerful magical items.

Exactly what the players are up against is probably best illustrated by the final battle, in which the adventures square off against a menace that can only be harmed by a seemingly random collection of spells and extremely rare magical items.

Because it ultimately violates so many of the tenets of good dungeon design, *Tomb of Horrors* was probably one of TSR's weakest early efforts, though it is certainly well remembered by long-time players. The original dungeon's infamy plus the prospect of an interesting "culture clash" between old and new styles of game design make the idea of a sequel published 20 years later intriguing, especially to veterans who remember the original. For the most part, Bruce Cordell does a solid job of living up to this potential and even manages to maintain some of the flavor of the original dungeon while updating the experience for more modern sensibilities.

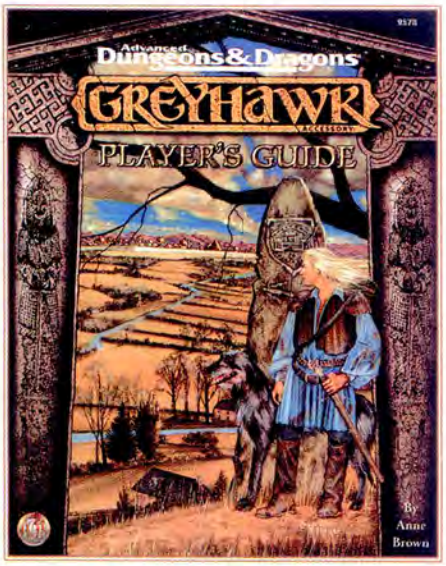
In accordance with a nice bit of backstory added to the original setting, the new material asks the players to avert a fresh threat to their homeland by negotiating a series of clue-driven encounters to discover the location of the original dungeon. Once they reach the Tomb, the adventurers find that its reputation and the mysteriously renewed evil emanating from within have compelled a wandering collection of necromancers and undead to construct an unspeakable city around its entrance. To succeed in their quest, the heroes must explore the city, work their way through a sinister college that rests directly atop the entrances to the Tomb, solve a couple of formidable riddles, negotiate the entirety of the original dungeon, and venture off the Prime Material Plane to confront Acererak in his real tomb.

THE ORIGINAL DUNGEON'S INFAMY plus the prospect of an interesting "culture clash" between old and new styles of game design make the idea of a sequel published 20 years later intriguing ...

With the exception of the slightly stuffy prelude that leads the adventurers to the tomb, the new campaign is quite well paced. Once the real action starts up, the players readily make consistent progress toward their goal, even though the *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* is a hefty and lengthy undertaking. Although the new campaign tries to match the style and sensibility of the original dungeon, its encounters usually do a much better job of confronting the players with palatable and well-balanced obstacles. While the emphasis remains on puzzle solving and overcoming unusual traps, the new campaign is comprised of a wide variety of encounters that test the adventurers' mettle in combat, provide some interesting opportunities for roleplaying, and allow the players to explore dungeon, city, and extra-planar environments. In fact, the most problematic phase of the campaign is almost certainly the chapter that requires the party to tackle the original dungeon and all its shortcomings. In any case, though it's far better balanced than the first *Tomb of Horrors*, this is still an extremely dangerous campaign, really only appropriate for very experienced player characters (no less than 13th level).

One of the stylistic flourishes *Return to the Tomb* borrows from its predecessor is a separate book of illustrations keyed to various locales and encounters. At several significant points, the illustrations allow the DM to show the players what their characters are seeing, making the whole experience much more immersive. Although these illustrations are far more attractive than those employed in the original product, both products really fail to use the illustrations to full advantage. Only rarely are the illustrations used to convey subtle clues about the environment to observant players. Still, there's no doubt that the illustration booklet is a helpful play aid. The few encounters that rely on the players' ability to glean information from the illustrations are uniquely satisfying, while even the less germane depictions spare the DM the chore of crafting some complex descriptions, making it much easier to run the campaign.

Evaluation: *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* is a solidly designed dungeon campaign for high-level adventurers. Since there's probably enough material here to keep most groups occupied for a few months, the $30 price tag makes this package a real bargain. Although *Return to the Tomb* is almost certain to appeal to most long-time players, the campaign's emphasis on trickery and traps means that it's clearly not for everyone. DMs looking to incorporate this product into their ongoing campaigns should think about spending some time to rework a couple sections of the original Tomb a tad in the interests of fairness.



Greyhawk Players' Guide

AD&D GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook

64-page black-and-white booklet; full-color cardstock insert

TSR Inc. $14.00

Design: Anne Brown with new material by Kij Johnson and Roger E. Moore; some material adapted from Jeff Grubb, Gary Gygax, Andria Hayday, Doug Niles, Rik Rose, Carl Sargent, and Jim Ward

Art: Tom Kyffin, Ted Naifeh, Sam Wood, and Ken Frank

Cover: Carol Heyer

Greyhawk: The Adventure Begins

AD&D GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook

128-page black-and-white booklet, 16-page map booklet, full-color cardstock insert

TSR Inc. $19.95

Design: Roger E. Moore

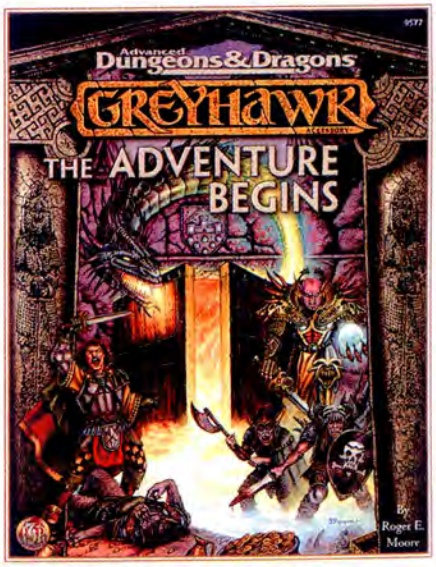
Art: David A. Roach and Sam Wood

Cover: Tony Szczudlo

GREYHAWK is the first campaign setting created specifically for the D&D game. It grew out of the earliest games run by Gary Gygax in the mid-1970s, and many of the tabletop exploits that shaped its history also changed the face of the AD&D game created in its wake: The AD&D rules themselves are rife with references that illustrate the influence of GREYHAWK (several spells and artifacts were named after the realm's most infamous wizards, like Tenser and Mordenkainen) and many of the assumptions that form the foundation of AD&D (such as the available character classes and PC races) were dictated by the setting's needs.

In flavor, GREYHAWK is not terribly unlike the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. It's basically a mishmash of quasi-medieval myth and legend, with pinches of Tolkien, Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, and King Arthur tossed in for good measure. Greyhawk is perhaps a tad more "edgy" than the Realms, and it presents a much more unified culture and vision. (Ultimately, just about every one of Earth's feudal or mythic cultures was shoehorned into the FORGOTTEN REALMS somewhere.) But despite a long history and a few distinctive flourishes, Greyhawk's basic flavor is still subdued enough to give the DM plenty of room to inject his own ideas. This makes the GREYHAWK setting capable of accommodating just about any more-or-less traditional AD&D campaign or adventure, making it easy for the GREYHAWK DM to switch back and forth between store-bought and home-grown material.

As a published product, GREYHAWK has a long history at TSR. Although the first supplement for the original D&D game was titled "Greyhawk," and most of the early adventure modules published for AD&D were nominally placed somewhere in the setting, the first real GREYHAWK product was a large campaign map and gazetteer released in the late 1970s. Although the idea, in those days, was clearly to keep the published setting as generic as possible to allow each group to tailor its own individual version, the Greyhawk product line ultimately underwent the sort of development effort expected of modern settings. By the late 1980s, TSR had released a couple of GREYHAWK boxed sets, a hardback overview of the setting, and a collection of various adventures and sourcebooks. In the early 1990s, as interest in the FORGOTTEN REALMS peaked, the support for GREYHAWK tapered off. Later, after one last hurrah in the form of a brief series of excellent products by Carl Sargent, interest in Greyhawk finally waned to the point where TSR no longer deemed it worthy of support.



The *GREYHAWK Player's Guide* and *GREYHAWK: the Adventure Begins* represent the first steps in yet another attempt to renew interest in the oldest of AD&D settings: Both products pick up where Carl Sargent's earlier efforts left off and attempt to provide a whole new direction for the GREYHAWK campaign. As the new campaign begins, the series of wars that ravaged the entire setting in the last handful of GREYHAWK products has finally ended, though the resulting truce is rather uneasy. With the addition of a few new members, the so-called "Circle of Eight," a cabal of powerful wizards pledged to protect the continent from evildoers, is now back to full strength after the archmage Rary turned traitor and slew his compatriots Tenser and Otiluke at the height of the wars. Tenser has since returned to life (via a *clone* spell) and the nature of Rary's betrayal remains a mystery. These threads and several others are left for new writers to develop and a new generation of players to tackle.

One of the frustrating things about the *GREYHAWK Player's Guide* and *GREYHAWK: The Adventure Begins* is that the exact relationship between the two products isn't quite clear. A close reading of the two reveals that the former is probably intended as a quick summary of the latter: players are supposed to purchase and peruse the *Player's Guide* to learn what their adventurers would know about the setting, while DMs are supposed to gravitate toward *The Adventure Begins* to learn some of the setting's

secrets. Unfortunately, the *Player's Guide* presents some important details not present in *The Adventure Begins* (not the least of which is a nice political map of the whole region), meaning the DM should really own both products. This means the poor DM is essentially forced to purchase a large chunk of duplicated material. In any case, a more explicit description of the contents and intended use of both the *Player's Guide* and *The Adventure Begins* on each product would undoubtedly clear up some confusion.

Marketing snafus aside, both of these products are quite well-written. Largely an update of a much older product, The *Player's Guide* contains nice, concise overviews of Oerth (the world of the campaign), the Flanaess (the large subcontinent that dominates the GREYHAWK setting) and the City of Greyhawk. Each of these descriptions touch on history, culture, and locations of interest, providing just the right amount of material for introducing new players to the setting. Also included are helpful descriptions of the various human, demi-human, and humanoid races that inhabit the Flanaess (including a few rules for generating PCs from all the appropriate cultures), notes on how characters act and interact in the setting, and a set of custom character kits based on some of the setting's most notorious orders and societies. A particularly nice touch is a page or two summarizing various mysterious locales that adventurers might want to visit. Although little of the material included in the *Player's Guide* is directly useful in play, if you can get your players to sit still long enough to read it, this sort of "deep background" overview goes a long way toward bringing a setting to life.

In general, *The Adventure Begins* contains most of the background information found in the *Player's Guide*, only each tidbit is presented in far more detail. Also present are some nice rules for generating the weather across the Flanaess and useful notes on law and justice in the setting. Pleasantly, *The Adventure Begins* also supplements all the histories and generalities usually found in products of this nature with lots of useful, specific descriptions of the City of Greyhawk and its environs. In total, these descriptions detail a large and complex adventuring environment (complete with keyed maps) and they're presented in a way that makes them directly usable in game play, allowing the DM to begin a GREYHAWK campaign with a minimum of preparation. Although some specific guidance on kicking off that first campaign or using the materials in the sourcebook to generate actual adventures would have been nice, there are certainly plenty of subtle adventure seeds buried just below the surface of the book's histories and descriptions.

PLEASANTLY, *The Adventure Begins* also supplements all the histories and generalities usually found in products of this nature with lots of useful, specific descriptions of the City of Greyhawk and its environs.

As nice as these products are (particularly, *The Adventure Begins*), there are two basic problems with this latest attempt to jumpstart Greyhawk. First of all, unlike the FORGOTTEN REALMS, almost all the development of the Greyhawk setting that has taken place in the last six or seven years has revolved around a single, central storyline. Fortunately, it's an excellent storyline, marked by plenty of twists and high drama. The problem is that all of its most interesting events (and therefore the most interesting facets of the "new" Greyhawk as a whole) take place on such an epic scale. Bigby, Tenser, and the other key figures that stand at the center of these events are all very high-level heroes. Fans with long-established campaigns and high-ranking heroes of their own will appreciate all this, but it won't be easy for DMs starting up brand new campaigns to figure out how new, low-level adventurers might interact with any of the world's most interesting features in a meaningful way. If it's to succeed, these are the exact DMs the new Greyhawk must reach and impress. Properly positioned, a GREYHAWK relaunch might have been used to provide new or lapsed players with a good excuse to start up a whole new campaign. Instead, even the first published adventure based on this revised version of the setting (RETURN OF THE EIGHT) was designed for adventurers of 6th to 12th level. Since Greyhawk already failed once, several years ago, due to a lack of interest, just how many active campaigns with higher-level heroes are still out there?

Perhaps more importantly, although this new vision of GREYHAWK builds nicely on the excellent work of a few years ago, TSR hasn't really revised the setting in a fashion significant enough to help build its audience. If gamers finally rejected the GREYHAWK campaign a few years ago, why is it going to be any different this time? What's really changed?

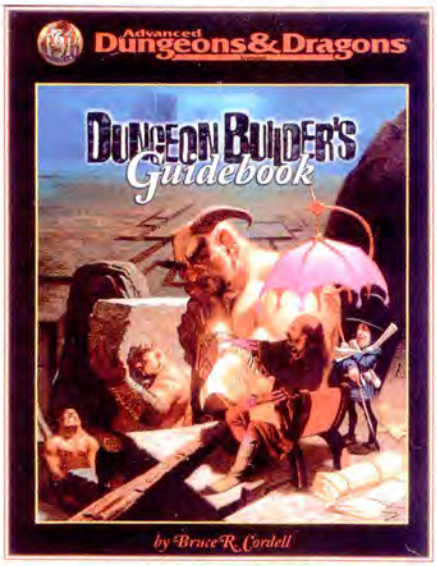
Evaluation: At the end of the day, though, both the *GREYHAWK Player's Guide* and *The Adventure Begins* are excellent products that probably do an even better job of describing an interesting, gameable chunk of a unified fantasy world than the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. DMs who are looking for a setting and willing to work a bit to get a campaign off the ground (especially in the beginning phases) should definitely take a look at these books, particularly if they can get their hands on some of the out-of-print GREYHAWK products from the early 1990s as well. Let's hope a new generation of gamers can keep the oldest AD&D setting in print alive for another 20 years.

Dungeon Builder's Guidebook

AD&D Supplement
64-page black-and-white booklet with 16 pages of black-and-white geomorphs

TSR Inc.
$14.95
Design: Bruce R. Cordell
Art: Arnie Swekel and Dennis Kauth
Cover: Daniel Horne

While those huge dungeon complexes are always fun to explore, they're a pain to design and map out. Back in the early



days, TSR published a series of products, known as "Dungeon Geomorphs" aimed at solving this problem. Basically, the geomorphs were cardstock pages depicting generic dungeon passages. The dungeons were designed in such a way that you could cut the pages into tiles and put the tiles together in almost infinite configurations to quickly form a staggering variety of new dungeon maps. Although the geomorphs were of no assistance when it came to actually stocking the dungeon and designing its tricks and traps, the quick, usable maps they generated were a huge time-saver.

Basically, the *Dungeon Builder's Guidebook* is a modern-day resurrection of the old-fashioned geomorphs. In several ways, the *Guidebook* improves upon the original concept. Now the geomorphs come complete with lots of guidance on how to add monsters, tricks, traps, and treasure to flesh out the maps you build. Although it would take several hundred pages to thoroughly address the art of building a good dungeon, the material presented here is an excellent start. Also noteworthy is that the included geomorphs allow the DM to build a nice variety of dungeons: aerial lofts, old castles, interdimensional strongholds, mines, natural caverns, ruins, tombs, and underwater complexes. Long-time players who fondly remember the old system for randomly generating dungeons (Appendix A in the first edition of the *Dungeon Master Guide*) will be pleased to know that it has finally returned here, in a much-improved incarnation. The new random system combines geomorphs, random rooms and passages, and randomly generated tricks and traps to surprisingly good effect. Like the old-fashioned geomorphs before it, nothing you build with this product will be ready to play without some work, but using the *Guidebook's* various tools certainly saves loads of time.

IN SEVERAL WAYS, *the Guidebook improves upon the original concept of Dungeon geomorphs.*

On the downside, the new geomorphs don't fit together quite as nicely as their ancestors and the fact that so many different dungeon types are covered results in relatively few tiles for each type. Still, anybody who appreciates a good, old-fashioned dungeon crawl will have a lot of fun with this product.

Evaluation: While the *Dungeon Builder's Guidebook* should prove useful to just about anybody who runs an AD&D campaign, beginning DMs are particularly urged to purchase a copy. Even if you never use any of its geomorphs or random charts, it's likely that the many included tips and examples will stimulate your creativity.

Short & Sweet

Usagi Yojimbo Roleplaying Game, by Greg Stolze (Gold Rush Games, $16.00). For those of you who don't read obscure comic books, Usagi Yojimbo is Stan Sakai's "funny animal" strip set in feudal Japan. Gold Rush Games' RPG based on the Usagi comics is remarkably well-presented and does a great job of capturing the goofy flavor of Sakai's strips. Based on the "Fuzion" game system co-developed by veterans of Hero Games and R. Talsorian Games, Yojimbo is quite accessible to players who've never seen the original comic strips (obviously a wise marketing move). Anybody looking for a nice, fairly lighthearted game of oriental-style butt-kicking is urged to check it out. You'd be surprised how much fun it is to play a samurai rhinoceros.

Encyclopedia Cthulhiana, 2nd Edition, by Daniel Harms (Chaosium, $14.95). Although pitched at the book market, *The Encyclopedia Cthulhiana* might be the most indispensable *Call of Cthulhu* sourcebook ever published. A complete A to Z of the persons, places, and especially the things that comprise the Cthulhu Mythos, the *Encyclopedia* is sure to prove a great asset to anyone designing or running *CoC* adventures and campaigns. Of course, you don't want to read more than a couple entries in any one sitting lest you suffer severe sanity loss.

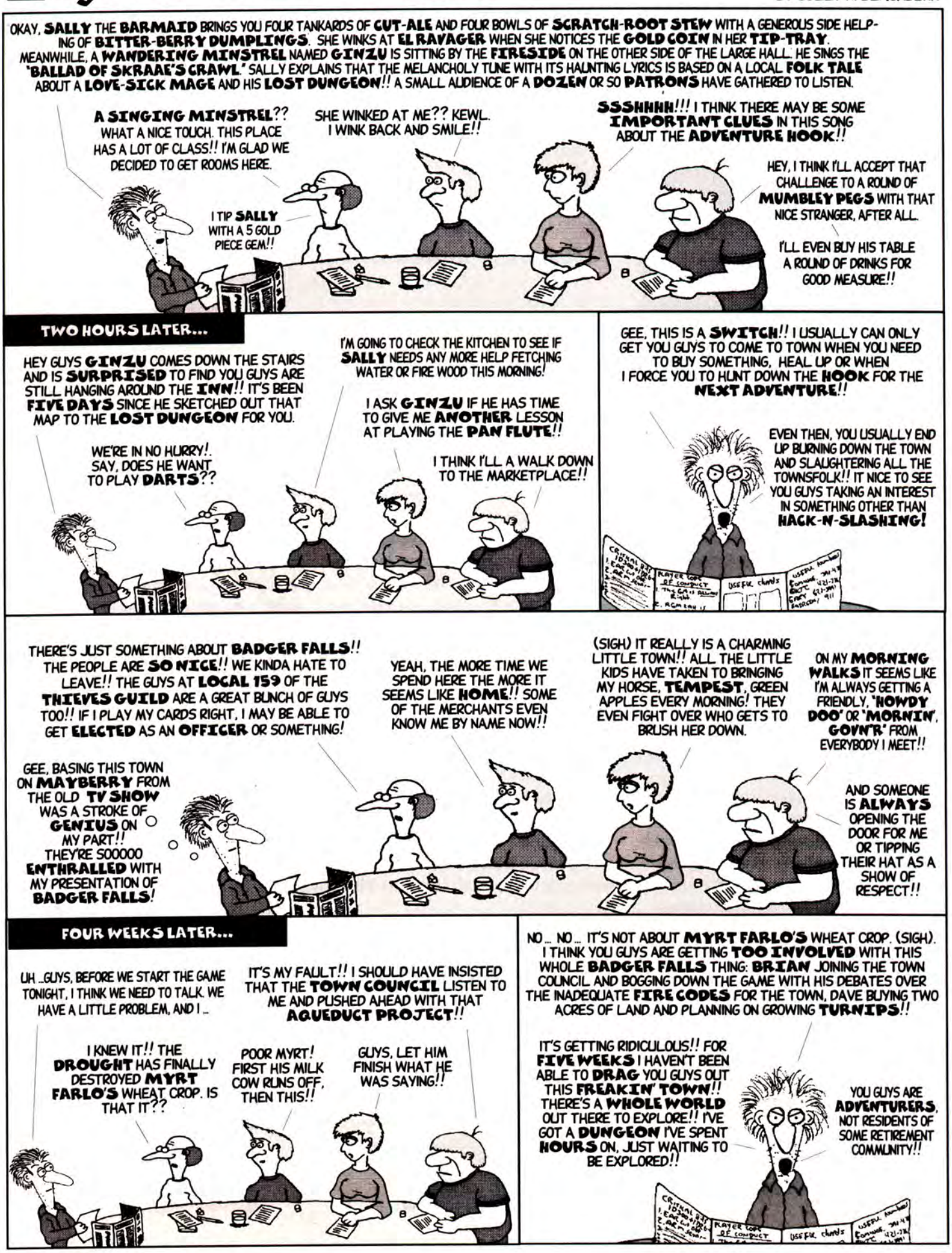
Although he now receives paychecks that actually clear, Ray Winninger spent several years as a full-time game designer. After writing this particular installment of the Role Playing Reviews, he's in the mood to join a good, old-fashioned AD&D game.

By Joseph Pillsbury

"I told you those shoulder spikes were a bad idea."

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN


OKAY, SALLY THE BARMAID BRINGS YOU FOUR TANKARDS OF CUT-ALE AND FOUR BOWLS OF SCRATCH-ROOT STEW WITH A GENEROUS SIDE HELPING OF BITTER-BERRY DUMPLINGS. SHE WINKS AT EL RAVAGER WHEN SHE NOTICES THE GOLD COIN IN HER TIP-TRAY. MEANWHILE, A WANDERING MINSTREL NAMED GINZU IS SITTING BY THE FIRESIDE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LARGE HALL. HE SINGS THE 'BALLAD OF SKRAAE'S CRAWL.' SALLY EXPLAINS THAT THE MELANCHOLY TUNE WITH ITS HAUNTING LYRICS IS BASED ON A LOCAL FOLK TALE ABOUT A LOVE-SICK MAGE AND HIS LOST DUNGEON!! A SMALL AUDIENCE OF A DOZEN OR SO PATRONS HAVE GATHERED TO LISTEN.
A SINGING MINSTREL?? WHAT A NICE TOUCH. THIS PLACE HAS A LOT OF CLASS!! I'M GLAD WE DECIDED TO GET ROOMS HERE.
I TIP SALLY WITH A 5 GOLD PIECE GEM!!
SHE WINKED AT ME?? KEWL. I WINK BACK AND SMILE!!
SSSHHHH!!! I THINK THERE MAY BE SOME IMPORTANT CLUES IN THIS SONG ABOUT THE ADVENTURE HOOK!!
HEY, I THINK I'LL ACCEPT THAT CHALLENGE TO A ROUND OF MUMBLEY PEGS WITH THAT NICE STRANGER, AFTER ALL.
I'LL EVEN BUY HIS TABLE A ROUND OF DRINKS FOR GOOD MEASURE!!
TWO HOURS LATER...
HEY GUYS GINZU COMES DOWN THE STAIRS AND IS SURPRISED TO FIND YOU GUYS ARE STILL HANGING AROUND THE INN!! IT'S BEEN FIVE DAYS SINCE HE SKETCHED OUT THAT MAP TO THE LOST DUNGEON FOR YOU.
WE'RE IN NO HURRY!. SAY, DOES HE WANT TO PLAY DARTS??
I'M GOING TO CHECK THE KITCHEN TO SEE IF SALLY NEEDS ANY MORE HELP FETCHING WATER OR FIRE WOOD THIS MORNING!
I ASK GINZU IF HE HAS TIME TO GIVE ME ANOTHER LESSON AT PLAYING THE PAN FLUTE!!
I THINK I'LL A WALK DOWN TO THE MARKETPLACE!!
GEE, THIS IS A SWITCH!! I USUALLY CAN ONLY GET YOU GUYS TO COME TO TOWN WHEN YOU NEED TO BUY SOMETHING, HEAL UP OR WHEN I FORCE YOU TO HUNT DOWN THE HOOK FOR THE NEXT ADVENTURE!!
EVEN THEN, YOU USUALLY END UP BURNING DOWN THE TOWN AND SLAUGHTERING ALL THE TOWNSFOLK!! IT NICE TO SEE YOU GUYS TAKING AN INTEREST IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN HACK-N-SLASHING!
THERE'S JUST SOMETHING ABOUT BADGER FALLS!! THE PEOPLE ARE SO NICE!! WE KINDA HATE TO LEAVE!! THE GUYS AT LOCAL 159 OF THE THIEVES GUILD ARE A GREAT BUNCH OF GUYS TOO!! IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT, I MAY BE ABLE TO GET ELECTED AS AN OFFICER OR SOMETHING!
YEAH, THE MORE TIME WE SPEND HERE THE MORE IT SEEMS LIKE HOME!! SOME OF THE MERCHANTS EVEN KNOW ME BY NAME NOW!!
(SIGH) IT REALLY IS A CHARMING LITTLE TOWN!! ALL THE LITTLE KIDS HAVE TAKEN TO BRINGING MY HORSE, TEMPEST, GREEN APPLES EVERY MORNING! THEY EVEN FIGHT OVER WHO GETS TO BRUSH HER DOWN.
ON MY MORNING WALKS IT SEEMS LIKE I'M ALWAYS GETTING A FRIENDLY, 'HOWDY DOO' OR 'MORNIN', GOVN'R' FROM EVERYBODY I MEET!!
GEE, BASING THIS TOWN ON MAYBERRY FROM THE OLD TV SHOW WAS A STROKE OF GENIUS ON MY PART!! THEY'RE SOOOOO ENTHRALLED WITH MY PRESENTATION OF BADGER FALLS!
AND SOMEONE IS ALWAYS OPENING THE DOOR FOR ME OR TIPPING THEIR HAT AS A SHOW OF RESPECT!!
FOUR WEEKS LATER...
UH ...GUYS, BEFORE WE START THE GAME TONIGHT, I THINK WE NEED TO TALK. WE HAVE A LITTLE PROBLEM, AND I ...
IT'S MY FAULT!! I SHOULD HAVE INSISTED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL LISTEN TO ME AND PUSHED AHEAD WITH THAT AQUEDUCT PROJECT!!
I KNEW IT!! THE DROUGHT HAS FINALLY DESTROYED MYRT FARLO'S WHEAT CROP. IS THAT IT??
POOR MYRT! FIRST HIS MILK COW RUNS OFF, THEN THIS!!
GUYS, LET HIM FINISH WHAT HE WAS SAYING!!
NO... NO... IT'S NOT ABOUT MYRT FARLO'S WHEAT CROP. (SIGH). I THINK YOU GUYS ARE GETTING TOO INVOLVED WITH THIS WHOLE BADGER FALLS THING: BRIAN JOINING THE TOWN COUNCIL AND BOGGING DOWN THE GAME WITH HIS DEBATES OVER THE INADEQUATE FIRE CODES FOR THE TOWN, DAVE BUYING TWO ACRES OF LAND AND PLANNING ON GROWING TURNIPS!!
IT'S GETTING RIDICULOUS!! FOR FIVE WEEKS I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DRAG YOU GUYS OUT THIS FREAKIN' TOWN!! THERE'S A WHOLE WORLD OUT THERE TO EXPLORE!! I'VE GOT A DUNGEON I'VE SPENT HOURS ON, JUST WAITING TO BE EXPLORED!!
YOU GUYS ARE ADVENTURERS, NOT RESIDENTS OF SOME RETIREMENT COMMUNITY!!

YOU **INSIST** ON HANGING AROUND THIS **STUPID TOWN** AND **BURN VALUABLE GAME TIME** DOING **MUNDANE TASKS** AND **ROLEPLAYING** EVERY LITTLE **TRIVIAL THING** LIKE PICKING OUT THE **JUICIEST PLUM** AT THE **FARMER'S MARKET** OR MAKING SMALL TALK WITH THE **OLD MEN** DOWN AT THE **PIER**!! I'M **BORED TO TEARS** OVER HERE!! IT'S LIKE VISITING MY **GRANDPARENTS!** SO TO HELP **SNAP YOU** OUT OF IT, I'M GOING TO SUGGEST WE JUST START TONIGHT'S ADVENTURE RIGHT AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE **LOST DUNGEON**!!

HUH?? BUT I NEED TO TALK TO **SHANK FLETCHER** ABOUT THAT HORSE HE HAS FOR SALE!! HE'S EXPECTING MY COUNTEROFFER THIS MORNING!!

AND **EL RAVAGER** NEEDS TO TAKE HIS **ARMOR** IN FOR REPAIRS!! **GUS** HAS SOME SPECIAL **NO-TARNISH BRASS RIVETS** ON SPECIAL ORDER FOR ME.

I HAVE SOME **COMPONENTS** TO SHOP FOR, AND I WANT TO DROP OFF MY **ROBE OF 'SHUN SUSPICION'** AT **FREYDAR'S ONE-TURN CLEANERS**!!

LOOK GUYS, JUST ASSUME YOU DID **ALL** THOSE THINGS, OKAY? BUT WE'RE **NOT** GOING TO BOTHER WITH **ROLEPLAYING** THEM OUT. IT WASTES **TOO MUCH** TIME AND ADDS **NOTHING** TO THE **GAME**!!

WHAT?? YOU SAYIN' I CAN'T HANG OUT WITH MY **NPC FRIENDS** ANYMORE?? BUT WE HAD **PLANS** TODAY!! **MASTER THIEF KROWLEY** IS GOING TO **GUEST LECTURE** AT THE **GUILD HALL** THIS AFTERNOON!!

I'M SUPPOSED TO BRING A MEAT DISH!

I DIDN'T SAY YOU COULDN'T BUY **SUPPLIES** AND RUN YOUR ERRANDS!! JUST PRETEND LIKE YOU DID ALL THE THINGS YOU WANTED TO DO **BEFORE** YOU ARRIVED AT THE **DUNGEON**!!

PRETEND?? HOW THE HELL AM I GOING TO KNOW IF I'M BUYING **QUALITY MERCHANDISE** OR GETTING A FAIR PRICE? AND IT'S NO FUN PRETENDING I'M HANGING OUT AT THE GUILD. I WANNA BE THERE SO I CAN INTERACT!!

YEAH!

BUT, B.A., I VOLUNTEERED TO HELP WITH THE **COMMUNAL HARVEST** TOMORROW. THEY'LL BE SO DISAPPOINTED!!

TEFLON BILLY JUST CAN'T DROP HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AND GO RUNNING OFF TO SOME **DUNGEON**!! I'VE GOT MONEY INVESTED IN THE NEW **BELL TOWER**!! I NEED TO SUPERVISE THAT WORK!!

FINE!! YOU GUYS WANT TO **LOLLY-GAG** AROUND **BADGER FALLS** AND LIVE OUT **UNEVENTFUL LIVES, SO BE IT**!!

HMMRRRFF!!! IF **THEY** WON'T COME TO THE **ADVENTURE**, THE **ADVENTURE** WILL COME TO **TO THEM**!!

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

SORRY GUYS, THE **MAYOR** SAYS ANYONE LIVING IN **BADGER FALLS** BETWEEN **60** AND **190** DAYS IS CONSIDERED A **PROBATIONARY CITIZEN** BY LAW!! SINCE YOU AREN'T **LAWFULLY EMPLOYED** YOU ARE CONSIDERED TO BE **LOITERERS**!! YOU HAVE TO PAY THE **FINE**!!

5,000 GOLD PIECES??

EACH??!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

SORRY BOB, THEY WON'T LET YOU INTO THE **GUILD HALL** OF **LOCAL 159**!! APPARENTLY SOMEBODY **BLACK BALLED YOU**!!

BLACK-BALLED?? WHO, ME? BY WHO?? WHAT FOR??

DUDE YOU'VE BEEN SNUBBED!!

OH MY!!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THE **CLEANERS** LOST MY **ROBES**!!

APPARENTLY SOMEONE SAW YOU **CHAINED** TO THE **PILLORY** IN THE **TOWN SQUARE** FOR FAILURE TO PAY THAT **LOITERER FINE**!! THEY FELT IT REFLECTED **BADLY** ON THE **THIEVES GUILD**!!

A WEE BIT LATER...

DAVE, AS THE **HUGE STRANGER** LIFTS YOU **OVER HIS HEAD** AND THROWS YOU **THROUGH** THE **FRONT WALL** OF THE **INN**, YOU OVERHEAR ONE OF THE OTHER PATRONS COMMENT THAT **'SALLY'S 'BOYFRIEND'** ALWAYS WAS THE **JEALOUS TYPE!** YOU LAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET IN A CLOUD OF DUST. BEFORE YOU CAN MANAGE TO GET TO YOUR FEET THOUGH, SEVERAL OF HIS **CRONIES** GRAB YOU BY THE COLLAR AND HAUL YOU TOWARD THE **TOWN WELL**!! BACK TO YOU, BRIAN. THE **INN KEEPER** POINTS TO THE SIGN BEHIND THE COUNTER. IT READS, **"PROPRIETOR IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR STOLEN OR LOST ITEMS FROM ROOMS."** HE DOES, HOWEVER, OFFER YOU A **FREE BOWL** OF **SCRATCH-ROOT STEW** AS TOKEN OF HIS REGRET FOR THE UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT!!

NOT RESPONSIBLE, MY **ASS**!! THOSE **RAT BASTARDS** AT **LOCAL 159** ARE BEHIND THIS!!

BOYFRIEND? DOES THIS MEAN THE ENGAGEMENT IS OFF?

COUPLE OF FIRE-BALLS COMING ONLINE, **B.A.!**

SEVERAL COMBAT ROUNDS LATER...

BOB YOUR **BOLT OF SKEWERING** STRIKES **MASTER THIEF KROWLEY** IN THE **FACE**!! HE CLUTCHES AT IT, **SCREAMING** AS HE FALLS FROM THE BURNING **BELL TOWER**!!

HOODY HOO!! GIMME **HIGH FIVE**, DUDE!! SO MUCH FOR **LOCAL 159**! NOW LET'S GO **TORCH** THOSE **GRAIN SILOS**!!

I'LL BE RIGHT WITH YOU, GUYS!! FIRST I'M GOING TO **GO MEDIEVAL** ON THE **TOWN COUNCIL**!!

SOMETIMES THEY SCARE ME!

YOU READ MY MIND, DUDE!!

SLAP!!

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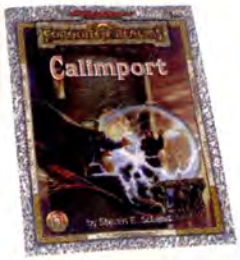

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NEW FOR NOVEMBER

Demihuman Deities

An AD&D Game FORGOTTEN REALMS Accessory
By Eric L. Boyd

Demihuman Deities, the final volume in the *Faiths & Avatars* series, features complete information for the deities of all major demihuman races. Full details on the individual deities, their churches, specialty priests, and church-specific spells are included for the elf, dwarf, halfling, gnome, and drow pantheons in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting.

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A FORGOTTEN REALMS Paperback Novel,
By Troy Denning

Return to the Utter East in a new FORGOTTEN REALMS story by veteran author Troy Denning. Atreus has come a long way to drink from the Fountain of Infinite Grace. Will the greed and prejudice of others stand in his way, destroying the fountain and its ancient guardians?

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TSR 8586
ISBN 0-7869-1183-2

TSR NEWS

STAR*DRIVE Launch Party

July 18th marked the official launch of the STAR*DRIVE™ Campaign Setting. Members of the ALTERNITY® Design Team and fans of the science fiction roleplaying game arriving at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in Seattle for a day of dining at Dalmuti's restaurant and live-action roleplaying. Players took the roles of ambassadors from the various stellar nations meeting on the planet Concord to put an end to the Second Galactic War.

David Eckelberry, pictured here, took the role of Jack Everstar, special reporter for the Transverge News Network. With each news report, the gathered ambassadors learned more about what the other nations were planning—if they could separate the hype from reality.

Foretelling the Future of Krynn

The next chapter in the continuing DRAGONLANCE® Saga took shape this past summer when authors Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman met with the series' other writers and editors for a three-day storyline discussion to kick off the epic *War of Souls* novel series.

No one is saying much about what exactly was decided behind those closed doors at Wizards of the Coast's Renton, Washington, headquarters June 15 to 17 (DRAGONLANCE team members refer cryptically to a "Vow of Silence"). However, fans are

Continued on page 117

Coming Attractions

Cover by Brom

Spontaneous Enchantments

By Lloyd Brown III

Without the *enchant an item* spell, how to magical weapons get that way? Here's the answer.

The Random Magical Weapon Generator

By Gregory W. Detwiler

A die-roller's dream, with more than 30 useful tables for generating unusual magical weapons in a flash.

A Treasure Trove of Tomes

By Scott Casper

A score of books, both rare and mundane, from the GREYHAWK® setting. Easily adapted to almost any campaign world.

Guardian of the Barrow

Fiction by Nancy Varian Berberick

"Against all foemen Beorn had proved its name. Until the dragon came."

Plus "Forum," "DragonMirth," "Arcane Lore," "Wyrms of the North," "Knights of the Dinner Table," a "ProFile" on Jolly Blackburn, and more!

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Legacy of Steel

Bridges of Time Series
A DRAGONLANCE Paperback Novel
By Mary H. Herbert

Inspired by the terrors of the Dragon Purge, the outcast knight Sara resolves to lead a new order of knights based on selflessness and mutual aid. To honor her adopted son's sacrifice, she names it the Legion of Steel. The second in a new series that bridges the years between the Classic and FIFTH AGE® settings.

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The Doomgrinder

An AD&D Game GREYHAWK Adventure
By Steve Miller

The third adventure in the Lost Tombs series features a monstrous windmill called the Doomgrinder. According to legend, this windmill grinds out the world's doom. The City of Greyhawk offers a grand reward to those who can turn back its clock—are your heroes up to the challenge?

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TSR 9581
ISBN 0-7869-1252-9

Children of the Night: Werebeasts

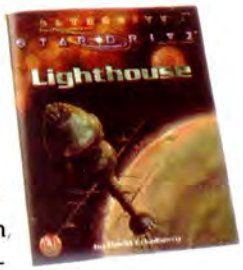
An AD&D Game RAVENLOFT® Accessory
By William W. Connors

This anthology of short adventures is third in the Children of the Night series. Thirteen lycanthropes—cursed with changing forms and the madness of bloodlust—are featured with histories, roleplaying strategies, and adventures created specifically for them. All play well both as stand-alone adventures and as parts of larger campaigns.

$16.95/$21.95 CAN
TSR 9583
ISBN 0-7869-1202-2

The Lighthouse

An ALTERNITY Game STAR*DRIVE Accessory
By David Eckelberry



Every campaign needs a place where heroes can rest, buy supplies, catch the latest rumors, and secure training or employment. For the STAR*DRIVE campaign that place is the *Lighthouse*, a starfaring outpost that roams the Verge and provides a starting point for adventure. Included are maps, ready-to-use supporting cast members, and story ideas.

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TSR 2804
ISBN 0-7869-1216-2

AVENGERS™ Roster Book

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game Accessory
By Jeff Quick with Michele Carter and Steve Miller

This reference guide to the Avengers features all the information you need to incorporate them, their friends, and their foes into your MARVEL SUPER HEROES adventures.

$17.95/$24.95 CAN
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ISBN 0-7869-1231-6

Avengers: Masters of Evil

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game Adventure Anthology
By Stephen Kenson

Featuring the THUNDERBOLTS™, this anthology pits the Avengers against the ultimate team of super-villains engaged in a world-shattering plot. The adventures can be played separately or together to form a MARVEL SUPER HEROES campaign of epic proportions!

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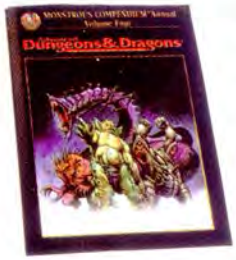
NEW FOR DECEMBER

Monstrous Compendium® Annual, Volume 4

An AD&D Game Accessory
By TSR Staff



Populate your world with more nasty creatures! This fourth installment of the *Monstrous Compendium Annual* contains the best monster entries from various accessories, adventures, and boxed sets produced during the year. An invaluable addition to your AD&D game library.

$19.95/$26.95 CAN
TSR 2173
ISBN 0-7869-1212-X

The Lost Shrine of Bundushatur

An AD&D Game RPGA® Network Adventure
By Michael D. Wagner

Buried for thirteen centuries, the ancient temple of Bundushatur has resurfaced. What lurks within its catacombs? This is a setting in the classic style of AD&D adventures. Intrepid adventurers can explore the musty corridors, discovering treasure … and perhaps something darker.

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Elminster in Myth Drannor

A Forgotten Realms Paperback Novel
By Ed Greenwood

Elminster in Myth Drannor, now in paperback, is the sequel to the best-selling *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*. To learn about elven ways and magic, young Elminster travels to Cormanthyr, where political intrigue and otherworldly sorceries abound.

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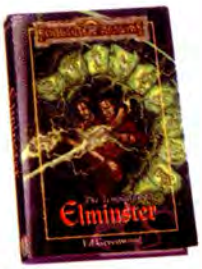
The Temptation of Elminster

A Forgotten Realms Hardcover Novel
By Ed Greenwood



The saga of the young Elminster continues! Myth Drannor has fallen, and glorious Cormanthyr lies in ruins. Elminster emerges from the rubble to serve new, human masters. Will the price of wizardly power be the young mage's very soul?

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The Inner Planes

An AD&D Game Planescape Accessory
By Monte Cook and William W. Connors

Of all the planes in the multiverse, none are as hostile to mortal life as the Inner Planes. From Fire to Water, Ooze to Ice, Lightning to Ash, they spring from the basic elements, from energy itself. This campaign expansion, with an accompanying adventure, tests your survival skills, revealing secrets of the Inner Planes sure to startle even the most jaded explorer.

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Threats from Beyond

An Alternity Game Star*Drive Accessory
By Bill Slavicsek

Threats from Beyond reveals details of the emerging alien menace known as the Externals. These unfathomable creatures have begun an invasion that could result

TSR NEWS (Continued)

buzzing online about what new adventures might lie in store for the heroes of Krynn.

Meanwhile, Weis and Hickman have gotten down to work on the first novel of their new Dragonlance collaboration, their first since 1995's blockbuster *Dragons of Summer Flame*. At the same time, game designers Steven "Stan!" Brown, Steve Miller, and William W. Connors, along with editors Carrie Bebris and Miranda Horner, are weaving the first of the adventures that will tie in with the *War of Souls* trilogy. Look for more details on the destiny of Krynn as they are revealed at TSR's website **www.tsr.com** and in the *Legends of the Lance*™ newsletter.

Forgotten Realms Summit

At this year's Gen Con® Game fair, authors Ed Greenwood, Bob Salvatore, Elaine Cunningham, Troy Denning, Lynn Abbey, and Mel Odom gathered with game-makers Steven Schend, Julia Martin, Dale Donovan, and others to discuss the past, present, and future of Faerûn for the better part of a day before adjourning to a nearby pub to let their ideas, ah, ferment. Savvy gamers at this year's Game Fair might have recognized this motley crew emerging from the conference room or the corner tavern. Team spirit and cooperation have reached a new high at TSR, and both gamers and novel readers will see the result in better continuity between Forgotten Realms books and games, more exciting events and stories in all Realms-related publications.

Dragon® Magazine & Dungeon® Adventures Online Seminars

Each month in the TSR Online chat rooms, the magazine staff meets with readers and contributors to discuss submissions, upcoming issues, and future plans for both of the TSR magazines. For the schedule and the chat software, go to www.tsr.com, choose "Community," then look for the chat/messaging option. We'll see you there!

Coming Attractions

Cover by Tony DiTerlizzi

Wildspawn
by Paul Culotta

The inhabitants of Revular's Island are out of this world! An AD&D® adventure for levels 6–8.

Priestly Secrets
by W. Jason Peck

Revisit the town of Restenford in this sequel to TSR's classic L-series adventures, *L1: The Secret of Bone Hill* and *L2: The Assassin's Knot*. An adventure for levels 2–4.

Dark Magic in New Orleans
by Randy Richards

Confront the terror in Bayou St. John. A RAVENLOFT® *Masque of the Red Death*™ adventure for levels 5–7.

Dreadful Vestiges
by Steve Johnson

The third adventure in the *Mere of Dead Men* series! A FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventure for levels 4–7.

How Do You Stop the Rhino From Charging?
by Steven "Stan!" Brown

It's a race to the finish. A MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ SideTrek.

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in the end of human history—unless heroes of the STAR*DRIVE campaign step forward to stop them. Includes guidelines for using this material to expand existing campaigns.

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TSR 2815
ISBN 0-7869-1218-9

On the Verge

A STAR*DRIVE Paperback Novel
By Roland Green

The second novel in the all-new STAR*DRIVE book line thrusts the Concord Marines into desperate action on the frontier of civilized space.

$5.99/$6.99 CAN
TSR 2814
ISBN 0-7869-1191-3

Palanthas

A DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE Dramatic Supplement
By Steven "Stan!" Brown

Palanthas is the first detailed look at Ansalon's best-known city. Now players and Narrators can make it their home, exploring the Great Library, the underground thieves' network, even the cursed site where the Tower of High Sorcery once stood. Palanthas is an excellent background source for the *Seeds of Chaos* adventure.

$11.95/$15.95 CAN
TSR 9588
ISBN 0-7869-1199-9

A Guide to Marvel Earth

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game Accessory
By Matt Grau, Harold Johnson, Stephen Kenson, Bill Olmesdahl, and Mike Selinker

The Top Secret material in this guide comes straight to you from the desk of Nick Fury. This official S.H.I.E.L.D. report details the homes, equipment, and secrets of some of your favorite super heroes and super-villains. Great for Narrators and players alike, the guide is lifted from the files of the greatest espionage organization in Marvel Earth!

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THE GAME WIZARDS

In July, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game staff celebrated the arrival of the first copies of the game with cake. After the inevitable sugar highs, wacky hijinx ensued.

Standing: Designer Steven "Stan!" Brown, editor Penny Williams, product group leaders Sue Cook and Harold Johnson. Sitting: Designers Mike Selinker and Steve Miller.

Here there be dragons...

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Profiles

R.A. SALVATORE

Drizzt's creator returns to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® in *The Silent Blade* and charts the new world of Corona in *The Demon Awakens*, *The Demon Spirit*, and this issue's short story, "Mather's Blood."

by Allen Varney

R.A. Salvatore has built a perfect world—and so has his alter ego, Bob Salvatore.

In 1982 he created the setting of Ynis Aielle for his first novel, *Echoes of the Fourth Magic*—written in longhand, by candlelight. In his two dozen other novels, he has ventured into the worlds Faerie (the "Spearwielder's Tale" trilogy, Ace, 1993–96) and Avon (the "Crimson Shadow" trilogy, Warner Books, 1996). He created a primeval myth-scape for the new shared-world anthology *Tales From Tethedril* (Del Rey, August). But readers know Salvatore best for his hugely popular novels set in TSR's FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and for their tormented hero, a dark elf born good in a society of evil.

Salvatore created his hero on the spur of the moment. "I had written a proposal for *The Crystal Shard* [1988]. It was going to be Wulfgar's story, set on the Moonshae Isles, because at the time I thought that *was* the Realms. When I found how big the Realms were, I moved the story a thousand miles to the north."

Wulfgar's original companion could not easily relocate, so TSR book editor Mary Kirchoff called Salvatore and asked for a new sidekick. He recalls, "I told her, 'No problem, give me a while to think about it, and I'll send a write-up.' She said, 'No, I'm going into a meeting, and I need the character right now.'

"I said, 'Okay, how about a dark elf?' There was this long pause. She said, 'A drow?' 'Yes.' 'Uh, okay. What's his name?'"

And Salvatore, who had never thought of writing a drow before that moment, blurted out, "Drizzt Do'Urden of Daermon N'a'shezbaernon, Eighth House of Menzoberranzan."

Where did those names come from? "I have no idea," he says, laughing. "It scares me, I try not to think about it."

Drizzt quickly took center stage in Salvatore's "Icewind Dale" trilogy (1988–90), the 1990-91 "Dark Elf" trilogy (*Homeland*, *Exile*, *Sojourn*), and later novels such as *The Legacy* (1993) and *Starless Night* (1994). Why has Drizzt enchanted so many readers, especially young readers? Salvatore calls Drizzt "the classic romantic hero—misunderstood, holding to a code of ideals even when the going gets tough, and getting no appreciation for it most of the time. I think a lot of young adults relate to that. But I don't think it's that simple. If I had any real idea why, I'd bottle it and sell it!"

Does he approach Drizzt novels differently now? "Nowadays I'm fleshing out those characters around Drizzt, both friends and enemies. *The Silent Blade* is really the story of Wulfgar and Entreri. They're pretty much at the same place emotionally. They're both lost, and they go about finding themselves"—with Drizzt's help.

"I like writing that really pushes me to the limit. It's fun when it takes you in new and better directions. With Drizzt, I'm starting to widen the stories and explore these other characters I like quite a bit. And I'm definitely going [in new directions] with Corona."

Corona—setting of *The Demon Awakens* (Del Rey, 1997) and its recent sequel *The Demon Spirit*—is a medieval kingdom with gemstone-derived magic. Creating this world "has challenged me more than anything else I've ever done," Salvatore says. "I love writing in the Realms, but now I've got a world that's all my own. I can blow up cities or topple kings as I see fit. It's harder, it's more work, but it's much more rewarding."

This issue's story, "Mather's Blood," introduces readers to Corona. "It takes place in pretty much the same location as most of the first book, but it's before the heroes were born.

"This world of Corona is the last fantasy world I'll ever create. I could probably write 15–20 books before I ran out of places to explore. Those people who know me today, know me for Drizzt. But I predict that in a few years, they'll know me for Corona."

Now 39, Salvatore is living happily ever after in his lifelong home of Massachusetts. He leads two lives, he says: "R.A. Salvatore is a different person from Bob Salvatore. R.A. Salvatore goes out on the road and signs books. Bob Salvatore has a life he never dreamed would be so much fun. I'm having more fun writing now than I ever have. I spend almost every day with my three kids and my wife. That's my real life. That's the real success."

R. A. SALVATORE

They meet again.

Wulfgar returns from the horrors of the Abyss to find there are some demons a hammer cannot crush.

Entreri has used his dagger to carve an empire from the streets of Calimport. Now he seeks the head of his oldest foe.

Drizzt waits, for his weapons cannot battle Wulfgar's despair or keep Entreri from growing in power. He learns that not all wounds bleed. And not all blades kill.

The Silent Blade.

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